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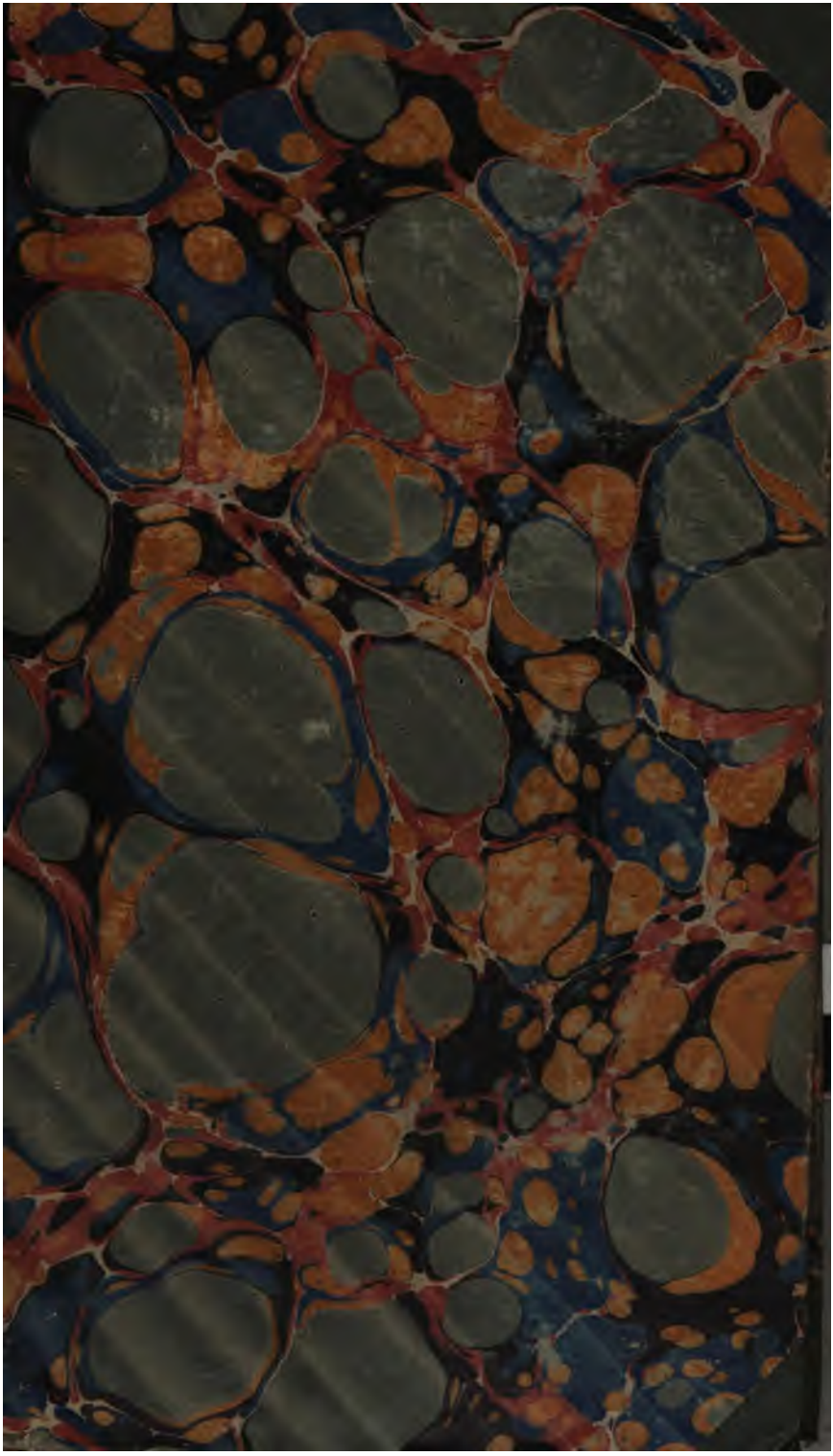

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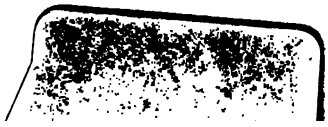

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MARRIED WOMEN.

CHAPTER I.

Behold the woes of matrimonial life,
And hear with reverence an experienced wife;
To dear-bought wisdom give the credit due,
And think for once a woman tells you true.

POPE.

FRANK staid more than a fortnight at Furley, and during all that time not a day passed but that Basil spent some hours of it at the cottage. The primary cause of this was that the young guardsman was sorely in want of

companionship; but it can hardly be said that Frank's society was the attraction which led Basil to renounce his favourite pursuits, and spend day after day in comparative idleness. He liked Frank, and thought he had that in him which would lead to better things, and higher aims, than that superiority in mere physical pursuits, which was now his pride and boast. Frank was very open and communicative, and Basil sighed more than once to think that this young fellow, at two and twenty, had all the world before him, with no clog save his own love of pleasure to keep him back.

At the beginning of the Christmas holidays, Basil acknowledged to himself that he felt a great interest in Miss Gresham; at their close, it would have been difficult to say exactly how or what he felt for her. One thing is certain, he might have met her every night in every week during the whole course of a London season, and he would hardly have understood

her so well, or appreciated her so justly as he did now.

Diana, like many other women, was more herself, and looked her best at home; and Basil saw her under every variety of circumstance. He perceived that Mrs. Gresham depended on her, and that Frank tyrannised over her, both from the very excess of their affection. If he envied the brother the spoiling and the devotion he received at the hands of his sister it is not to be wondered at; for Basil had been all his life the victim of both his father's and his mother's selfish extravagance. No one had ever made him their first and best. If he resolved that should heaven ever bless him with such a wife, he, on the contrary, would indulge and worship her; it is to be hoped he will keep his resolution when that time comes, for he certainly had been educated in a very different school from that which formed and fostered Frank's exacting love.

It was a great effort on Mrs. Gresham's part when the time came for Frank's departure, to let him take Diana with him to London, as she had promised. The being left alone for the first time with her younger children revived the sense of her great loss, in all its full force; but Bob, whose holidays had not yet expired, promised to take the care and companionship of his mother upon his own doughty shoulders, and what he undertook, there was little doubt but that he would perform; while Basil, who had of late become quite a member of the family circle, pledged himself to the still harder task of looking after Bob himself, who was rather prone, in his aspirations towards the estate of manhood, to try his mother's nerves not a little. Di placed a good deal of dependance on Alice, and certainly between the two, and with Basil, as Frank said, to look in on them every day or two, it did seem possible that Mrs. Gresham might get

through the next three weeks in tolerable comfort.

Her step-mother's despondency had almost robbed Diana of all the pleasure she might otherwise have felt at the prospect of seeing her sister. But she sincerely rejoiced she had come notwithstanding all, when she felt Milly's arms flung round her neck, heard her enthusiastic words of welcome, and saw the tears of mingled joy and sorrow, which filled her eyes. Mrs. St. Clair Glenny cried, and laughed at herself for crying when she was "so glad," almost hysterically, but as "dear St. Clair" was not at home to witness her artless emotion, it did not matter, and had no worse effect than to induce Frank to pledge himself to return all the way to Belgravia to dinner, which, on the journey up he had informed Di, was quite out of the question.

When Captain Glenny came back from his

Club, both the sisters were dressed for the evening, and his little wife was talking as fast as ever, and with all her wonted animation; but Di fancied—it might have been only fancy—that she was not quite so vivacious after her lord and master had asked her what she was laughing at, and on being told the mere trifle which had amused her, said, "Oh, is that all?" still as Di told herself, she should not have noticed it, if Frank had not put her on her guard.

When they went down to dinner, however, she must have perceived the young wife's anxiety; for, from the time the first dish was placed on the table, Milly never opened her lips to speak. The fish, happily, gave universal satisfaction, but when the joint came in, and the cover was removed, the master of the house remarked, "mutton again!"

"Dear St. Clair, I thought you liked roast mutton," said his wife, who evidently understood the meaning of the tone.

"Yes I do; but I think you might have given your sister something besides."

Milly was beginning an apology; but Di assured her she did not care the least what she eat, and Frank backed her up by saying, "a leg of mutton was the best thing in the world."

"So it is if it be well done," added Captain Glenny testily, and pointing to the first slice he had cut, "I don't know who is in fault, you or your cook, Mildred, but we cannot dine on raw meat."

Milly turned as red as the fire, which ought to have roasted the mutton, and Di began to be afraid she would burst into tears. Much less of a rebuke would have upset her composure before her marriage, but Frank so loudly expressed an opinion in favour of broiled mutton, that she had time to recover her voice, and fortunately while the ruddy joint was undergoing that process, a news-

vendor passed down the street, crying, "second edition, second edition! important news! Downfall of Paris; assassination of the Emperor!" and by the time the paper was bought, and the whole was ascertained to have been a fabrication, they had obtained the wherewithal to satisfy the cravings of hunger.

Milly did not rally from the effects of this *contre temps* all the evening, nor did she make the smallest allusion to it to her sister, when they came up from the dining-room. That it occupied a good deal of her thoughts, Di gathered from her instantly telling her that on the morrow they were invited to dinner by old Mr. and Mrs. Glenny.

"You see a good deal of Captain Glenny's relations, I suppose?" remarked Di, after having expressed her concurrence.

"Yes," replied Milly, we always dine there twice a week, which is a comfort," added she with a sort of sigh.

Diana remembered what Frank had said, and almost laughed.

"Then you get on well with them, and like them better than you thought you should; I am glad of that."

"Mr. Glenny is so very kind, it is impossible not to like him. He makes me such beautiful presents, he would give me a horse, a brougham, and a coachman, only St. Clair thinks we could not afford to keep them this year."

"Give you a coachman!" repeated Di, with a smile.

"Of course I meant he would pay his wages," explained Milly, rather indignantly. "But try as I will, I cannot be friends with Maria," proceeded she. "She is so disagreeable; even St. Clair says, 'I may as well let it alone.' I am sure he dislikes her himself, only he is too good to say so."

Diana was not quite so deeply impressed with Captain Glenny's amiability, as was his

loving little wife, but she kept her opinions on that head to herself; in fact, she had hardly, as yet, matured them.

The next day was one of unceasing rain, and the sisters did not attempt to leave the house, nor did they see Captain Glenny from the time he came into the drawing-room after breakfast, and said, "Goodbye, Milly, take care of your sister, for I am going into the city," till he came home rather late to dress for dinner. Neither did they miss him, for they had enough to talk about to last them for many a rainy day.

Diana had had so much to think of the evening preceding Milly's wedding, that she had not had much time dwell upon Mrs. and Miss Glenny's merits or demerits, and, as the old stockbroker reminded her, on their arrival in Hyde Park Gardens, he had been laid up with the gout on that great occasion.

Old Mr. Glenny was short and stout, and his shining, bald head was fringed round with

snow white hair, while whiskers of the same hue made his rosy face look redder still than it was by nature.

When Diana saw what a dinner he eat, she only wondered that he was ever free from gout, but though he talked loud and laughed boisterously, still she liked him. If he were not very polished, he was shrewd and sensible enough, and withal so kind-hearted and good-natured, that after Mrs. Glenny's very frigid courtesies, it was refreshing to hear his hearty welcome. It was evident he had a great liking for his pretty little daughter-in-law, for he gave her a hug when she came in, and kissed her on both her cheeks, which treatment Milly submitted to with the best grace in the world, and before the evening was over Diana quite came to the conclusion that her father-in-law was the best and kindest friend her sister had among all her new relations.

Captain Glenny was his mother's favorite; she was not very gracious to his wife, she was

so wrapped up in her own importance that she generally either overlooked her or lectured her, and to-night, directly they retired to the drawing-room, she asked Milly, in rather a sour voice, why she had not come to her Dorcas' meeting the previous afternoon?

"I was waiting at home for Di," said Milly, good-humouredly. "I did not know exactly at what time she would arrive; but I have finished the frocks for those poor little children, which you asked me to make, only I quite forgot to bring them."

"You have not the best memory in the world, Milly," remarked Maria, with a little laugh.

"Ah! well," sighed Mrs. Glenny," who was sitting comfortably on the sofa, surrounded by every creature comfort, "this is a sad, selfish world."

Nobody disputed the truth of this aphorism, so the last speaker followed up her advantage.

"Get the work basket, Maria, it won't do to be sitting idle all the evening."

Maria accordingly produced a work-basket filled with coarse flannel, ready cut and fitted, and in a rather soft voice, Mrs. Glenny, who had been a little disconcerted by a searching glance direeted at her by Diana, after her last speech, asked whether Miss Gresham would kindly aid in their charitable work.

Diana infinitely preferred hemming to sitting with her hands before her, so down they all sat round the table, and Miss Maria provided her with a thimble, after having rather sharply reproved Milly for forgetting to bring hers.

"You are not much used to this sort of thing I suppose, Miss Gresham," remarked Mrs. Glenny, in a self-satisfied manner.

"Making clothes for the poor is nothing new to me," returned Diana, quietly; "Milly and I have been used to do so ever since we

learned to hem and sew, but I have no further acquaintance with the Dorcas Societies."

"I should not have thought it," answered her hostess.

Diana looked up in astonishment.

"I should not have thought your father approved of that sort of thing," rejoined Mrs. Glenny.

Milly worked on steadfastly, but Diana saw her colour rise, aud felt it incumbent on herself to speak. It was like re-opening a hardly closed wound to mention her father to strangers, still she made the effort, though something in her throat almost choked her.

"My father never felt that too much could be done for the poor; no one was more active in their behalf than he was; but he thought that in their endeavours to ameliorate the condition of the working classes, societies and individuals alike often begin at the wrong end, and make useless efforts, from lack of knowledge, not from want of will."

Mrs. Glenny was silenced, if not convinced, and before anything more offensive was said, the gentlemen made their appearance.

Their host drew in his chair between the sisters.

"What! spoiling your pretty fingers at such coarse work, Miss Gresham," said he.

Diana could be just as gracious to him as she was supercilious to his wife, and he chatted away good-humouredly to both her and Milly, treating the one like a favorite child, and the other with the most marked deference.

"Come, Milly," said he at length, in a loud whisper, "tell me which theatre you will like a box at to-morrow night; you must take your sister to the play you know."

Milly glanced, half frightened, across the table,

"Never mind the old lady," said he, with a knowing wink; "she shall not shut you up as she has poor Maria."

"You know, papa, I entirely disapprove of playgoing," retorted that young lady.

"Yes, my dear, and more's the pity. Now, Milly," added he, lowering his stentorian voice, "tell me where shall it be?"

"Wherever you think fit; anywhere except the Lyceum," returned his daughter-in-law, looking her thanks.

"And why not the Lyceum? they've the best Christmas piece."

"St. Clair went there the other night," explained Milly.

"And did you not go? Why did he not take you?"

"He could not; he went with some of his old brother officers," said she, promptly.

"And left you all alone?"

"I did not mind it—really I did not," was the little wife's eager response.

"I say, St. Clair, that was not the way men treated a pretty little woman in my day; I never went anywhere without my wife when I first married."

St. Clair was adding sugar to his coffee, and

pretended not to hear; his mother did, however, for she looked glum and frigid enough, though she held her peace.

"Take my advice, my dear," persisted the old man, "never let your husband go anywhere without you."

Captain Glenny recovered his hearing.

"Milly knows better, I hope, than to try to tie me to her apron strings," said he, coldly, and taking refuge at his mother's side.

It may be remarked that Mrs. Glenny thought and acted very differently now from what she had done in early life. She had been very lax and indifferent in religious matters then; now she was very severe in her judgments on all those who did not hold exactly the same views she did.

"What was my father whispering to you about in the hall, Milly?" said Captain Glenny, when they were seated in the family coach, which had brought, and was now taking them back again.

"He was only asking whether we should not like to have his brougham to-morrow afternoon?"

"And you accepted, of course?"

"Yes, I knew Diana had some shopping to do."

"Quite right; and if he offers you the carriage in the evening, take it by all means."

All came to pass as his son had anticipated; when, at the conclusion of their drive, the sisters went into the city to fetch Mr. Glenny from his counting-house, as he had bargained, he not only brought out in his hand two enormous bouquets of hothouse flowers, one of which he pressed into Milly's palm, while he offered the other, with his best bow, to Diana, but he said he had ordered the carriage to call for them a little before seven.

Milly sat bodkin, and strained her voice to make the old man hear her through all the noise and rattle of the Strand. She had talked herself into good spirits by this time, but she

had been very low all the morning; why, Di could not conceive, but had it not been for the intervening ceiling, she might have heard Captain Glenny in the dining-room below tell his wife that as her brother was engaged, he had asked Frederick Leslie and another fellow to go with them to the play, but that as she never gave him a tolerable dinner at home, he had promised to dine with them at the Club, where she could stop on the way and pick them up, if she liked.

Diana was not sorry to hear that she and Milly were to dine at luncheon. "Dear St. Clair" did not partake of the meal himself, still he was graciously pleased to carve for his sister-in-law, and expressed a hope that she might find the pie eatable.

He was dressed and gone to his club before the sisters returned from their drive, and though Milly sighed a little at not having been home in time to see him, she cheered up over their tea, which good-natured Jane carried up

to Diana's room, where they partook of that refreshment, and fancied it the school-room at Sutton. She was in very good spirits, too, at the play, and she talked so vivaciously to her old friend Frederick Leslie, whom she had not seen before since her marriage, that Captain Glenny more than once told her she was edifying her neighbours in the next box, and finally by dint of scolding reduced her to silence.

Their days passed very much after the same fashion. Diana really enjoyed her visit, and thought it very considerate of Captain Glenny never to deprive her of her sister's society; for he was out almost every day and all day, though what he did with himself was a marvel to her, till Milly told her he generally went to his club. The time of day she really dreaded was the dinner hour; then, despite of every effort on Smith's part, everything went wrong, and before she had been there a week, Diana discovered that not only could Captain

Glenny speak sharply to his wife, but that he could storm at the servants, and curse them under his breath lest she should hear.

The next time they dined in Hyde Park Gardens there was a large dinner party, for Mrs. Glenny, though in speech she utterly condemned worldliness, dearly loved to cultivate fine and fashionable people, and duly honoured anything like rank. It was her connection with the peerage, which alone enabled her to tolerate her simple little daughter-in-law. Frank was perpetually asked on this same account, and in the course of this evening Di at last found an opportunity for a little private conversation with him. Her brother urged her counselling Milly to give better dinners, but Diana felt a little hesitation in beginning a subject, which, from her silence, was evidently such an annoyance to her sister.

At last, when she had been there just a week and a day, the opportunity she was awaiting presented itself. On Tuesday morning, Milly

came up from ordering dinner with half a dozen red and green tradesmen's books in her hands, and Di needed not to be told they embodied the weekly household bills. And Mrs. St. Clair Glenny, whose name was written outside of all of them, sat down at her davenport to look them over. It took her about an hour to sum up the items, and finally add up the amount of the whole on a slip of paper. Then she opened a secret drawer, and took out her money; she counted it over more than once, but that process did not multiply either the gold or silver, and at last, in a lamentable voice, she said—

"I have not got near enough."

"Can I lend you any money?" said Diana kindly.

"Oh, would you?" said Milly, brightening up. "St. Clair is gone out, and will not be back till dinner time."

Diana, who having just received her half-

year's interest, felt tolerably rich, soon appeared with a five pound note.

"Thank you, Di, I will ask St. Clair for the money and pay you again to-morrow."

"I wish I knew how to manage," continued Milly, sorrowfully, "I have spent more than I ought again this month. Dear St. Clair will be very much displeased."

"And yet you do not live at all extravagantly," rejoined Di.

"No, that is the worst of it. At first I used to try to give better dinners, but then they cost so much; now St. Clair is always complaining, and the bills are not the least smaller."

"I think Captain Glenny would not mind what he had for dinner, if it were better dressed," said Di, who was strictly just.

"Mrs. Glenny engaged our cook," returned Milly despondingly; "still I know if we are not to run into debt, I ought not to spend so much. St. Clair laid it all before me."

"All what?" asked Di.

Mrs. St. Clair Glenny explained her meaning somewhat lengthily.

Di thought and said that her brother-in-law's calculations, with respect to their expenses, were most just, clear, and correct, which sentiment gladdened the heart of his little wife, who liked to hear him praised. If he were fractious occasionally, as yet she loved him none the less.

"But what am I to do?" asked she.

"May I look at the books? I ordered dinner during three months of last year," said Di, with a sigh, "and I still do the accounts for mamma, so I might be able to show you the difference," added she gently.

Milly was but too pleased. Di set to work with all her heart; she soon found out the delinquent; it was evidently Mrs. Glenny's paragon of a cook who was in fault. It was some time before she could make Milly understand her calculations. At last, however, she saw it all, and again asked what she was to do. To par

with the delinquent was the most natural proceeding, but Milly said she dared not, Mrs. Glenny would never forgive her, and this Di thought was very probable.

Next morning Mrs. St. Clair Glenny went down primed with her instructions, and surprised Mrs. Cook by giving her very exact and precise orders, and reaped her reward by the dinner being sent up worse than ever. The following day that aggrieved individual took her young mistress severely to task, and rated her soundly for venturing to interfere in matters which she informed her "beneath the notice of a lady," to the no small indignation of Smith in the adjoining pantry. Milly came up breathless with the rencounter, and ran open-mouthed into the drawing room to consult with Di. Captain Glenny chanced to be there.

"What's all this—what's the matter?" asked he.

Milly was too much aghast to tell him; but Diana had her faculties about her. In a very few

words she laid the whole affair before her brother-in-law.

"Poor little Milly," said he, kindly. "Here have I been abusing you every day, and it is all this horrid woman's fault. I have been rather hard on you."

"No, no, you have not," and Milly pressed up close to him.

Diana had always known that Milly worshipped her husband, but lately she had begun to think that Captain Glenny did not care so very much about his poor little wife. She saw now she was mistaken. In his heart he was very fond of Milly, still he never considered her, and rarely troubled himself about her, but left her entirely to act and judge for herself, and, after all, Milly was but seventeen, and very young of her age; and then, worst of all, he scolded her, and hastily rebuked her for mistakes, which she really fell into from want of knowing better.

The affair of the cook was speedily settled. Captain Glenny took the onus of the business

into his own hands, even to bearing the blame with his mother. Diana happily remembered that Miss Courtenay had a *protegée* in whom she was much interested, one who had previously lived in her household, who would be just the person for Milly, and would not be likely to take advantage of her young mistress. It was a great satisfaction to Diana to see "the liberal economy," which she knew pervaded every department of Miss Courtenay's establishment transferred to her sister's little *ménage*. The weekly bills fell considerably under this new influence, and what was almost as much to be desired, the result of Ann's culinary labours was such as to satisfy the most fastidious palate.

So far so good; the real danger of outliving their income, and the minor one of badly-dressed dinners, were alike averted; but before our heroine's visit came to a close, she began to fear that a more imminent peril stood in the way of her sister's domestic happiness. Captain Glenny had not a good temper—he

was hasty and irritable; if he could not scold about his dinner, he fretted and fumed about some other trifle. Milly bore it with the most exemplary patience; she neither murmured nor relaxed in her efforts to please; but when he was cross, she was sad, and it was plain to see that although she still worshipped "dear St. Clair" with all the fondness and fervour of a first love, she was gradually becoming afraid of her husband. It was his fault, if before they had been married a year, his little wife was beginning, though unconsciously, to measure out her words, and to temper her natural gaiety with discretion in his presence.

And worse still than unkindness—the impression left by which a few kind and caressing words as yet sufficed to efface—was Captain Glenny's systematic neglect of her whom he had vowed to love and cherish. He made it a principle not to be tied to his wife's apron strings, but retained all his bachelor habits, and did not seem disposed to resign one of

them for her who was so ready to sacrifice all for him.

In more instances than one, Diana thought her brother-in-law selfish, and among others, in that Milly, who, born and bred in the country, pined for air and exercise, was left by him to obtain both as best she might. Captain Glenny thought he had done enough when he bargained with Smith that he should walk behind his mistress. Except on Sunday he never offered to accompany her himself, and if Milly asked it as a favour, which she sometimes did, it was never very graciously accorded; and, after all, there was but little freedom or freshness in roaming about the streets and parks with a tall footman behind her. It was a far greater treat to Mrs. St. Clair Glenny, when Jane's duties allowed her to go with her as far as Kensington Gardens, where she might sit on the seats, feed the water fowl, or rove about at her will.

"Dear St. Clair" commended himself for

rarely yielding to the temptation of dining at his Club, but he was generally in a fidget to be off there in the evening, and would constantly look at his watch to see if ten o'clock were ever coming. At this time of year there were a good many men's dinners, to which he would jestingly ask Milly's permission to go. It was always willingly accorded, but his sister-in-law thought it must be very dull for his wife, if she were often left to pass her evening, as well as her day, quite alone.

Milly was just at an age when every little pleasure was a real enjoyment, but because she was contented and uncomplaining, when left at home, and he was tired of that which had all the charm of novelty for her, "Dear St. Clair" never put himself out of the way to provide his young wife with amusement. This was the least part of his neglect, and Diana began seriously to wonder whether there were any unalloyed happiness in this unreal and artificial world of ours.

CHAPTER II.

Herman.—Do I not know she's woman—
Fickle, vain, ambitious?
Antonio.—Inconstancy is but the trick of woman—
She's worse than false——

* * * * *

Gomez.—*Not* wronged me? Thou art innocent!
Thy kisses too—they—they were innocent!

THE NOBLE HEART—A Tragedy.

THE last week in January had been the time fixed for our heroine's return to Furley. In spite of Milly's entreaties she did not like to postpone it; the day and hour were both arranged, when she received a letter from Lady Stanford, asking her to come to Sutton Priors on her way home. Lord Stanford was going

to Yorkshire for a week; it was the first time he had done such a thing for years—Lionel unfortunately had engagements at Leamington just about the same time. She should be quite alone; it would be a real act of charity if Diana would come and share her solitude. It was a request which our heroine did not know how to deny.

Florence had been at Leamington for the last month. Lady Vaughan had established herself there for the winter; she liked the place, and during the lapse of nearly thirty years, her past peccadilloes had become merely traditional. The peerage made mention of her as relict of Baron Vaughan, etc., and did not date her re-marriage with Mr. Russell; it sounded all very right and proper; and by help of her daughter's position, and the countenance of some of Florence's fashionable friends, who lived in the neighbouring counties, and came into Leamington occasion-

ally in search of gaiety, Lady Vaughan had attained a very good position in the society of that watering-place.

Florence liked being there excessively. She was less under restraint than in London, where she must follow, not lead the fashion. Sutton Priors was too stiff and formal for her taste, and when there was nothing in the way of a settlement, or an increase of allowance to be obtained by staying there, she was very glad to make her mother the excuse for leaving it, equally rejoiced to be able, by nominally making it her head-quarters, to leave the nursery establishment behind her, which, moreover, insured Lionel's spending the greater part of his time at home, and released her of the restraint of his presence.

Lady Vaughan, however, was very fond of her son-in-law, his wrath against her had been all expressed by letter, in word and action he showed her far more kindness and consideration than she met with at the hands of her own

child. Besides this, Lady Vaughan was a worldly wise woman, she was practically aware of the danger of outraging the opinion of that portion of society which is said, "to make a world," and she was perpetually warning Florence against "going too far." Perhaps she was not a person likely to lay much stress on her failure in duty; but she did tell her daughter that what people looked on as a pardonable indiscretion in a girl, they viewed in a very different light, when the act of a married woman. If these assertions were not in accordance with the strictest code of morality, it was neither more nor less than the truth, when she laid before Florence, that a young wife, who lived on the terms she did with her husband, and who was hardly ever seen in his company, was much more likely to become an object for scandal than one who paid more attention to decorum.

It is almost needless to say, that these arguments fell on dull ears. Florence persisted in

the course she had begun; she was intoxicated by admiration, infatuated by, at last, achieving that success in society which she had so long and so vainly desired. And, above all things, the Vicomte de Chavigny had again appeared upon the scene of action. As Miss Russell, and some five or six years before, he had paid Florence every attention short of offering her his hand in marriage. Lady Vaughan thought he had treated her daughter very ill, in which opinion, at the time, Florence had coincided; and Mr. Russell, after vainly trying upon him the manœuvre his wife had so successfully practised upon Lionel, had forbidden him the house.

In the full tide of the London season, Mrs. Gresham had again met with her quondam admirer; it was not very difficult to guess how and why they had made up their old quarrel. However, they had carried their flirtation so far as for Florence to consider it necessary to give out among her particular friends that she had refused M. de Chavigny long

ago; she did not think it any discredit to her that he should be supposed to be still in love with her; far from it; like most fashionable ladies on the continent, and but too many of their imitators in England, she believed a lover to be a needful adjunct to her position; she only repudiated the idea of returning the passion she employed every means in her power to enhance. There never was a case in which the truism was more fully verified, which asserts, "that it is far oftener vanity than passion which misleads a married woman."

Lady Vaughan and her daughter had more than once very wordy discussions on this very subject, and matters must have come to a great pass for the former to think it necessary to interfere. It is probable she would never have remonstrated at all, if Florence's conduct had not excited some remark. It was not the wrong, but the parading it, which she warred against; and, by way of screening her daughter, she made a great point of securing Lionel's

presence at Leamington on every possible occasion.

This week, in particular, there was to be a large fancy ball given in the public rooms, at which all the county families and Leamington fashionables would be present, and the wily woman of the world determined Lionel should give his wife the sanction of his presence. Lionel, too, felt something of this, not that, for one moment, he mistrusted Florence, but his kindly heart saw something to esteem in her upholding of her mother, in which act of filial duty he deemed she needed some support, and willingly accorded it, for the name of Gresham was known and respected even by those who thought Lord Stanford old-fashioned, strict, and formal. It was no pleasure to him to take part in scenes of this kind; and it was generally his custom, after escorting his wife and her mother into the room, to stay about an hour, and then depart.

On this night, it was probable that, as usual,

Florence would dance all night long; she relinquished Lionel's arm to swim through a quadrille with her usual air of coquetry and foreign grace with the Duke of ——. She had some half-dozen formal dances to get through, and Mrs. Gresham, by no means disliked having all the grandees, both young and old, on her list as partners; she had been nobody, and less than nobody, as Miss Russell, quite long enough for that to be an object to her. When the Vicomte de Chavigny's turn, at last, came, she inwardly congratulated herself that Lionel was no longer to be seen.

Later in the evening, there was an immense crowd in the saloon, where supper was served, and the greater part of the assembly seemed unwilling to leave that festive scene, though the more eager of the dancers had gradually made their way back to the ball-room. Every part of the building was thrown open on this occasion, and withdrawn from the turmoil of the feast and the dance, at the far end of the

long corridor, where it was but dimly lighted by a single lamp, held by a marble statue of Venus, sat a pair, on a low luxurious sofa, who bowed beneath the influence of the son of that false and fickle goddess. So, at least, it seemed; for a slight and graceful figure was pressed to the heart of a tall, pale, and dissipated-looking, though still handsome man—a heart above which the ribbon of the "Legion of Honour" won in fight at Algiers, shone. It was a strange anomaly, if any could have read the thoughts which throbbed so fast and fiercely in the heart, which beat beneath that decoration: and he, who would have rebutted the charge with scorn, had any one doubted his being a "*chevalier sans peur et sans reproche*," clasped the hand, and pressed mad kisses on the cheek, brow, and lips of one, whom he well knew, had vowed, in the sight of God and man, her fealty to another.

It was the first time actual words of passion had passed between them, and the flower-crowned head was bent, perchance, in shame.

She, at least, saw not the expression of mingled triumph and self-gratulation, which shone in the large prominent grey eyes, which were bent upon her, else she had hardly drunk in so eagerly the soft, mellifluous accents, which, in a foreign tongue, spoke so fluently of a love, which could neither be suppressed or governed longer. As if that studied part, that effervescent frothy vanity, were worthy of the name of love.

A door opened almost upon them, but neither heeded it, so intoxicated were both by the mad excitement of the moment. The sound of a too familiar voice first broke the spell, and Florence started, conscience stricken, as she heard her husband say—

"This way, I think, will lead to the ball-room—"

He stopped abruptly—he did not finish his sentence—and if the portly dowager on his arm were occupied in beckoning on some other stragglers—if he stood, for a moment, so as to screen his wife from invidious eyes, he saw it

all; she knew it by the lightning glance, which flashed from his dark eyes, by the frown which gathered on his brow.

For an instant, Florence cowered and quailed beneath his gaze; all the flattering unctions, all the lying sophisms she had gathered round her heart, and by which she had excused or palliated her conduct to herself, failed to give her confidence in that dread moment. The blood, which had mantled to her husband's face, rushed back, and left it pale, stern, and unmoved, as an avenging angel's; and with one look of withering scorn, and angry defiance, which rested on the form of M. de Chavigny, Lionel turned away. They passed up the long corridor, more people came through the tardily opened door; but neither of those two spoke, till the last rustle of floating draperies had died away in distance.

Lionel Gresham was not the first angry husband whose vengeance M. de Chavigny had eluded. His words were few, earnest, and

forcible, for was not his safety, even more than hers, endangered?

Five minutes later, and a tall, dark form stood on the same spot, with clenched hands and indignant gesture. No time was to be lost. Lionel hastened to the entrance; among a row of liveried servants stood his own man. Breathless with agitation, he asked whether he had seen his mistress pass out?

"No, sir, no;" said Thomas, in surprise.

"If she comes before I return detain her. Tell her these were my orders, this moment uttered," urged Lionel, seeing the man's astonishment.

He made the tour of every room; preserving, to the best of his ability, an appearance of composure. How, or where, could she have escaped him? He paused on the threshold of the ball-room; the crowd had thinned slightly, and a gorgeous dress, of gold and white, flitting among the dancers, caught his eye. He could hardly believe the evidence of his senses; but there was little doubt it was Florence, waltzing

with Frank Gresham; and when they paused, almost in front of him, she was looking up into his face, unruffled, animated, and smiling as if nothing of moment had occurred.

Lionel knew his cousin was on a visit in the neighbourhood; but he had not seen him before that night, nor had his wife, for, as he approached unperceived, he heard Florence, in playful tones, reproach him with having forgotten her, upbraid him with not having been near her before that evening.

Frank laughed and excused himself. Perhaps, Florence felt that her star was on the wane.

Lionel forced himself to wait till the music ceased; then he came up. His greeting with his cousin, was uttered in such unnaturally measured tones that Frank looked at him with surprise.

"You will excuse me, Frank," said Lionel, with a sort of terrible calmness, and he held out his arm to Florence.

She did not dare refuse; but her mood had changed, and when, in some amaze, Frank

looked on her defiant, angry countenance, he mentally thanked heaven he had not a wife with such a temper.

"Good night, Frank!" said Lionel. He did not know how hard he wrung his cousin's hand.

Frank looked after him with more of kindness than he had felt towards him for many a long day.

"Poor fellow! if all they say be true, he is likely to be bitterly punished for his fault. He would have been a different man if he had known his own mind."

It was a great deal for Frank to allow.

In the cloak-room, Lady Vaughan was awaiting them; she rather anxiously scanned her daughter's physiognomy, for Lionel's hurried manner, in previously asking her to meet him there, had excited a suspicion in her mind that something was amiss. Florence's countenance, however, as she gathered her costly opera-cloak around her, betrayed no feeling—but one of extreme ill-humour. Her mother did not dare

speak to her; and, in silence, and with all his wonted courtesy, Lionel handed both ladies into the carriage. Not a word was spoken as they drove rapidly home. They soon reached the handsome house—for the rent of which Lionel, by means of a present from his mother, had made himself answerable. Lady Vaughan was hastening up stairs, glad to be out of the way of the explosion, which she saw was at hand, when her son-in-law opened the drawing-room door, and asked her, as a favour to himself, to come back.

Lady Vaughan drew towards the blazing fire, and, in the glass, marked her daughter seat herself on the sofa, towards which Lionel had motioned her. There was not one latent look of softness, nor of remorse, in that unrelenting, defiant face.

Lionel stood with folded arms near the fire; he was pale, but a deep, settled look of resolution was stamped upon every line of his hand-

some features. He never moved his eyes from the indomitable face, which confronted him.

"Florence," said he, at length, "I must request some explanation of the scene I witnessed this night."

She did not answer, but began leisurely to unclasp the jewels from her neck and arms.

"I must know exactly on what terms you stand with this man—with M. de Chavigny." The name hissed through his teeth, but he would not let his passion master him. "Therefore, I have requested your mother to be present."

He turned towards Lady Vaughan. It appeared, as though once released from the piercing glance of his dark, lustrous eyes, Florence could speak.

They were bitter, passionate words which rose to her lips; even her mother trembled and strove to stay them, but it was in vain. She would be heard. Duty, principle, womanly

instinct, and wifely feeling, were all cast from her like a flimsy veil, and she openly avowed her love for M. de Chavigny. It was a strange confession for a husband's ear; and yet, defying suspicion, and beforehand with objection, she still coupled this protestation of passion for the one, with an asseveration of her perfect innocence towards the other.

"Innocent!" retorted Lionel, passionately; "Innocent—" he could not trust himself to say more.

Florence doggedly repeated her assurance. Which was true, at least in her application of the word—true, if any woman who listens to tales of love, and receives the caresses of another, than her husband, can really be called innocent. It must have been a vain, shallow, and intrinsically selfish nature, which prompted the galling words, on which she dwelt with heartless emphasis, as she sat there surrounded with luxuries whose names she had hardly known before her marriage, arrayed in the most

becoming toilet a busy fancy could devise, and fingering jewels worth a king's ransom. And the strange thing was she valued these baubles, to her they were beyond all price, worth far more than the heart she had done so little to win, or the love which, even had it been hers, she would equally have trampled in the dust.

It is vain to record all that passed. Lady Vaughan, with temporising policy, strove to mediate; but Florence would not listen. Her temper had so got the mastery of her, that she was like one who had taken leave of her senses. She turned on her mother with flashing eyes, and cheeks, which rage made white and livid, even through her rouge.

"You know I loved him—years ago I loved him. It is your fault; you urged, you drove me into this marriage." With sudden vehemence she turned towards her husband. "Have you never cursed the ties that bound us? Have you never pined and panted to be free? Deny it if you will, you never loved me!"

Her virulence had cowed Lady Vaughan, her violence calmed Lionel. He advanced towards the table, by which she sat.

"You are right; but it was not I who deceived; till the day which saw our marriage I never breathed one word of love, I made no protestations—uttered no fond vows."

She strove to interrupt him, but he would not be stayed.

"I do not deny that then there was one nearer my heart, than ever my wife has been, or could be. I do not deny that for many long months, one image alone followed me, and filled my every thought, engrossed my every feeling. But I can say, that when our child was born, and I offered you my love—did my best towards a reconciliation—that I had then resolved to put the past away; that, since that time, not even in thought, have I ever allowed myself to cherish too tender an interest in the companion of my childhood."

He paused, yet no one spoke; those low, thrilling, earnest accents had stilled for a time, the outward expression of his wife's fury and he resumed.

"It is because, in this, I have ever felt most guilty, bitterly repentant, anxious to make what amends I could to you, who have a wife's claims upon me, if you have never cultivated a wife's affection, that I have striven to surround you, Florence, with the outward adjuncts of happiness. And I have stood calmly by, and seen you bestow on others the smiles, which never fell on me."

Again she burst forth. Lionel hardly seemed to heed her, he waited till she paused to recover breath, and then proceeded as if no interruption had taken place.

"For this cause, and not less that since the first raising of the mask you have been most open, and I believe perfectly truthful in your declarations of indifference towards myself, I

will take you at your word now, and I will believe that this night you have spoken the truth and that—that—"

He could not proceed, his conquered passion could not brook this recollection. He walked hastily up and down the room.

"Let that pass," said he, at length, "I am willing never to recur to it again." His agitation hardly allowed him to proceed. "But for the sake of the name I bear, a name, which for long generations has been untarnished and without a stain, I must insist on some concession on your part. You must, at once leave this place. We must give up our house in London, and you must be content to move in a very different sphere. At Sutton Priors, or in the neighbourhood, provocations such as this are not likely to arise. Such people as this Frenchman are not likely there to prey on our domestic peace."

The very thought irritated Florence.

"M. de Chavigny will have sailed for Africa before another day has dawned and passed," said she, contemptuously. "You have not much to fear." She had learned the wily tempter's lesson perfectly.

"It is well. Still, in future, I must take care that neither he, nor any other, dares to prate of love to my wife."

She saw that he was terribly in earnest; but it was not in her nature to yield the slightest point, or even to confess herself to be in the wrong. She flung his concession back in his face—she dared him to take that name from her, of which he was so proud.

Lady Vaughan began to think her daughter mad, and so she was, but only with temper. She keenly felt M. de Chavigny's desertion; temporary, though he pledged himself it should be, it irritated her that he should not accord her his support at this critical juncture. She had become familiarised on the continent with

the thought of duels, and, at this moment, would not have cared if her husband's blood had stained her lover's hands, only so far as it would have compromised her with the world.

"Enough," said Lionel, bitterly, and he turned to leave the room. "You are right, you will have money, and a certain position, when separated from me. That, I believe, is all you value. So be it."

Lady Vaughan threw herself in his way.

"Oh, Lionel, have mercy. Believe one who has herself erred; have mercy! She does not mean what she says; she knows not what she does. I *have* known, she is my child, for your own mother's sake, have mercy."

Lionel was not one to despise such an appeal, justly angered as he was. It agitated him more than all Florence's reproaches and revilings had been able to do.

"For your sake, and at your intercession, Lady Vaughan, I will give your daughter

twelve hours for consideration," said he, firmly.

"If she changes, which I hardly expect," added he, more sadly, "let her be prepared to start with me for Sutton Priors in the afternoon."

And on these terms they parted.

CHAPTER III.

Death on thy brow is life-like yet,
And o'er thine eyes the cold lids close,
As softly in their placid rest,
As some meek infant's in repose.

Thy polished cheek retains no tear,
No sigh disturbs thy quiet sleeping;
And the fond mourners gather near,
Thou canst not hear the voice of weeping.

Can this be death? Ah! who in sooth,
If this were all, would fear to die,
And change the feverish dreams of youth,
To share thy deep serenity.

AGNES STRICKLAND.

LATE in the evening of the following day, our heroine, was sitting in Lady Stanford's dressing-room. The invalid had been

suffering more than usual, ever since her arrival, at the beginning of the week, and as they were quite alone, there was little inducement to descend, and occupy the desolate drawing-rooms. Lady Stanford was lying on the sofa, and Diana was charming away that, as she had done many another weary hour, by reading aloud. The soft tones of her voice, as they rose and fell in the rhythm of the poem, had lulled Lady Stanford's quivering nerves almost into unconsciousness, and as for herself, she was too much interested in the loves of "Eglè and Arthur," to heed aught else.

The door opened, but she thought it was only one of the servants, and did not look up till her attention was attracted by the intruder's moving quietly towards Lady Stanford's sofa.

"Lionel!" ejaculated she, in some surprise.

Her cousin answered by one of his sad, silent smiles, and his mother opened her eyes. She was so overjoyed to see him, that she

never thought of enquiring what had brought him home so unexpectedly.

Di alone perceived something strange in her cousin's manner. He refused all refreshment, said he did not want anything, and yet by his own account, he had left Leamington in the course of that afternoon. He was not nearly as silent as usual, on the contrary, he talked incessantly, and with some little excitement, and unusual eagerness. He hardly gave his mother time to ask any questions, so quickly did he pass from subject to subject, scarcely ever pausing for an answer.

At breakfast, the next morning, his conduct was quite the reverse of what it had been over night. He was quiet and sad in the extreme. He was evidently struggling against an access of gloom and depression, but there was something so painful in his efforts to shake off these influences, that Di was glad when their short *tête-à-tête*, meal was over.

As she passed through the hall, she saw the

old gamekeeper, with his dogs and gun, standing under the portico; he had heard of his young master's return, and was waiting for him. She went into the library to look for a book, and through the half-open door, heard Kidd remind his master that this was the last day of pheasant shooting, and tell him he had kept a covert for the chance of his coming home.

"I am afraid I cannot come out to-day; I have letters to write which must keep me in doors," said Lionel kindly. There was no one more loved by his dependants, or more popular with all the lower classes. It was his manner which so won on them.

Old Kidd persisted.

"If I can, I will send for you in the afternoon," answered Lionel, apparently more to rid himself of his importunities than with any intention of complying with his wishes.

If he had letters to write, he did not set about them very quickly, for he came several

times into his mother's dressing-room, where Di was sitting, to ask if she were awake. Lady Stanford had had a very bad night, and Harris would not let him go into her room.

It was luncheon time before Lady Stanford made her tardy appearance; Di was gathering up her drawing materials, preparatory to leaving the room, and heard her say to Lionel, who had just come in—

"I do not know what is the matter with me, but I feel unable to make any exertion; the least sound to-day is enough to bring on my palpitations."

Her son looked at her anxiously.

"What are you going to do, Lionel?" asked she.

"Nothing; I have some business letters to write, but I rather wanted to talk the matter over with you before I sent them."

"I have hardly my senses about me," said Lady Stanford, smiling "these dreadful sleep-

ing draughts are worse in their after effects, than any restlessness."

Lionel needed but to look in her pale face, to see that she was unfit for any exertion, mental or bodily. He turned away.

"I shall wait till to-morrow then; one day's delay will be of little consequence after all," said he quietly.

His tranquil manner quite deceived his mother; she never for an instant imagined that any pressing anxiety was weighing on his mind.

"Why do you not go out shooting, Lionel?" asked she. "Kidd has been up to the house every morning, to enquire whether you were likely to be home by to-day."

Diana did not wait to hear her cousin's answer, but as she came from the luncheon-room, she saw Lionel loading his gun in the hall. She went down to the village to see some of the old people, and it was almost dark before she returned. She went straight

to Lady Stanford's dressing-room. Her aunt had rallied; she was quite cheerful, and said she should come down to dinner as Lionel was at home.

Diana sat talking with her bonnet in her hand over the fire; she thought she would not change her dress till her cousin came in, then she could make her toilet for dinner at the same time. She sat and sat, and had so much to tell of those she had seen in her walk, that the dressing gong sounded before she thought of moving.

"I wonder Lionel has not come in," remarked Lady Stanford, as she left the room. Diana did not hurry herself; the clock struck seven before she descended; she believed the mother and son would be much happier without her. Lady Stanford had moved down into the little drawing-room; it opened into the small room, where they usually dined when quite alone.

"Will you ring, Di?" said she, as our

heroine entered. "I do not think Lionel can know we dine at seven."

Diana did as she was bid.

When the butler obeyed the summons, Lady Stanford repeated—

"Will you tell Mr. Gresham, I do not think he can know, we dine at seven."

"Mr. Gresham is not come in, my lady," answered that functionary.

"Not come in'" echoed Lady Stanford in surprise.

"No, my lady."

Lady Stanford so well knew that illness had made her nervous, that she never willingly gave way to unfounded alarms. A very tedious quarter of an hour passed before she would allow Di to ring, or permit herself to make more enquiries.

The same servant reappeared.

"Did I not hear the side door open a little time back?"

"Yes, my lady; I sent John down to

Kidd's cottage, to see if his wife knows which covert the beaters were sent towards to-day. If Mr. Gresham went up the hill, he is likely to be late."

"Let me know when he returns."

It was not very long before Collins re-opened the door; he preserved his composed manner, but Di saw that he, too, was a little frightened.

"Kidd himself is at home, my lady. He says he waited about near his own cottage, till it was dark, expecting Mr. Gresham."

The hand by help of which Lady Stanford raised herself on her sofa trembled visibly.

"Send to the stables; very probably Mr. Gresham changed his mind, and went for a ride." She tried to speak quietly.

"One of the men heard Mr. Gresham fire off his gun, within five minutes of leaving the house, my lady. Up in the shady

walk, both barrels, almost in the same moment."

"Mr. Gresham must have gone shooting by himself then. Send all the men out; he must have sprained his ankle, or met with some such accident."

Lady Stanford sank back powerless on the sofa.

"Kidd did set off directly, my lady, and I have sent all our own men in every direction," said Collins, even in his excitement, not losing his pomposity.

In a large house, when few are stirring, sounds are easily heard, they echo far and wide. Before very long, there was a kind of movement plainly audible in the wing on the opposite side of the hall to that in which they were sitting, and where Lionel's rooms were situated, and at the same moment, hurried footsteps passed the window.

Lady Stanford rose, and feebly, but hur-

riedly, and proceeded to the door; she was half way across the hall before Di had recovered her astonishment. It was years since she had seen her walk so far without assistance. In the hall they met Collins; he was as pale as death, and his eyes seemed starting from his head. He addressed himself to Miss Gresham.

"Keep my lady back, for mercy's sake keep my lady back, Miss Gresham, it will kill her;" and the man literally groaned in anguish.

Diana knew not what to fear, nor what to think; she only felt something very dreadful must have happened, and in agitated tones, she begged Lady Stanford to return.

She must have been endowed with more than earthly strength, for she only waved them back, and kept steadily on. Since her son was a child she had not passed along those winding passages, down the steep steps that led into the room he had occupied, since the time when he was a boy at Eton.

A group of terrified servants clustered round the bed; one candle only burned on the table, and the fire had almost died out. They were all there, from the highest to the lowest in the household; the women were weeping, but that was the only sound which broke upon the ear. All fell back at Lady Stanford's approach. As she entered the room, she had grasped Di's arm as for support; they now stood together by the bed-side.

Lionel lay on the snow-white coverlid, in a careless, natural attitude, his head turned to the wall; not much could be the matter; for he still wore the rough, shaggy shooting-suit, in which he had left the house. His mother laid her hand upon his arm, removed it, and looked at her own thin, white palm with alarm. It was wet with the dew and frost of heaven.

"Is he stunned?" whispered she. "Have you sent for Mr. Rogers."

Harris, who stood behind her lady, tried to answer, but tears choked her utterance.

Lady Stanford repeated her question.

Collins, who had followed them closely, looked at Miss Gresham; it seemed as if he could not address his lady.

"Mr. Gresham is dead—shot through the heart," was the answer, which passed over his white, trembling lips.

Poor Di! she neither moved nor answered. It might be that she was frozen with the sudden horror, or that she did not realise the precise meaning of the man's words.

If Lady Stanford heard, she did not heed them.

"Lionel!" said she, "Lionel."

She spoke in that low, deep, and intense tone of earnest affection, which, if aught could, must wake the dead.

"Lionel, Lionel!" repeated his mother, in a low voice. She appeared to fancy he was only slumbering, or partially insensible, and feared to rouse him suddenly. She raised one hand, which lay listlessly on the bed-clothes.

The cold, clammy touch seemed to startle her, for she dropped it in affright.

"Oh, Lionel! Oh, my son, my son!" cried she, in rising agony, like the bereaved parent, in scripture story. She took his head in both her hands, she turned the pale face towards her, she pressed her lips to cheek and brow, but there was no responsive mark of affection, as she seemed to expect.

The face, on which Di's distended eyes fell, looked strangely beautiful. It was white as riven snow, save in the cheeks, and there something of sun-burnt ingrained colour lingered, which had deceived Lady Stanford. The eyes were closed, and the curly hair fell lank and dark across his brow, contrasting strangely with the calm, regular, chiselled features; there was no look of distress or pain, but a loving happy smile played about the mute, cold lips. It was not the Lionel of later days, it was far more like the dear cousin, whose image had

once been cherished in her very heart of hearts.

But the living, not the dead, claimed her care. On the counterpane, and on one hand, that which lay innermost, was a blood-red stain of gore. Lady Stanford saw it.

"Shot through the heart," repeated she, in slow, distinct, yet melancholy accents, and as the words were uttered, she sank slowly to the floor.

It was more than a common fainting fit, she had swooned away: her hand tightly locked round that of her son. Di unclasped the slender, nerveless fingers. They lifted her up, they bore her away, she following close.

"May the Lord have mercy!" said an old man, solemnly, who had lived as groom in the family more than a score of years, "I had rather see my lady so, than look on Miss Gresham's face. It's worse than death, it's really awful; and my young master did so love her once. Poor young lady!"

The hardest heart must have felt for her, as she stood at the foot of Lady Stanford's sofa, pale and immoveable, her features almost as ghastly and death-like as those of the dead lover of her youth. She neither wept nor spoke, but remained watching the sobbing women, as they used all the accustomed restoratives. One sharp thrill of pain shot through her heart, as the thought arose, of how would her uncle ever bear to hear of the sad and sudden death of his only son.

There is no need to despair of the future of any human being who has learnt entirely to put away self. No one had thought of sending for Lord Stanford till Diana went down. With a precision and calmness which chilled the hearts of those who heard her, and saw her suffering face, she gave the necessary orders. More than four-and-twenty hours must elapse, before Lord Stanford could by any possibility, be brought back to the house, whose light and glory had passed from earth. One man was,

by her desire, to travel down into Yorkshire, another was despatched to seek her brother Frank.

Some time necessarily elapsed before she returned to the dressing-room. The outer-door was locked ; but she passed in noiselessly by a side entrance. What a sight was that which met her eye and stayed her step ! Harris only was in the room, and on the floor, rolling from side to side in writhing agony, lay poor Lady Stanford. Her face was distorted, her hands clenched, her features convulsed by mortal anguish. Diana was about to spring to her side, and raise her up, when the waiting woman caught her arm.

"Come away, Miss Gresham—come away ! this is no fit sight for you."

Di's look said, "I cannot go, I must help her," but Harris drew her forcibly back into the adjoining room.

"My lady would never forgive me if I per-

mitted you to stay," said Harris, in a whisper, "never speak of what you have seen Miss Gresham, even Lord Stanford does not know how much my poor lady sometimes suffers," added she.

"But to-night —" began Di. Something sad and wistful in her eyes moved the reserved Harris to speak.

"It is nothing much more than usual, these spasms, or convulsions, or whatever the doctors choose to call them, are always the consequence f my lady is agitated. It has been so for years." She spoke like one trying to steel her heart, but with tears trickling down her cheeks.

"If ever there was a living, patient martyr, it is my dear lady," proceeded the woman, who, now that her lips were unsealed, could not but speak. "For a long time I never knew what was amiss; but one night when my lady seemed very bad, instead of going when

she bade me, I stepped behind the window-curtain, I could not bear to leave her, and then I saw what you did, Miss Gresham. I could not stand there and bear it, I fell on my knees by my lady, and took her poor hands in mine. She chid me when she came to herself—but you know what her anger is like, Miss Gresham—and she made me promise never to tell what I saw, and I've nevor breathed it to any one since, and never will, please God."

. A faint voice called "Harris," and with her finger on her lip, and motioning Di to depart, she stole away.

After a time Lady Stanford sent to summon Miss Gresham. She had been moved to her bed, and was lying back pale, exhausted, and tearless. She held out her arms to Di directly she saw her enter. Poor Lady Stanford! in the midst of her own sorrow and suffering, she found time to remember what the unhappy girl must be enduring. Her heart was too full to allow of many words, but the tenderness of her

endearments, the fondness of her caresses spoke volumes to Di, whose earnest, passionate expressions of love and sympathy at last melted the mother's grief to tears.

Lady Stanford would not keep her. It was late; and she begged her to retire to rest, to try to sleep; Diana obeyed mechanically. As she passed down the long corridor, an unhappy childish wail burst upon her ear—it was Lionel's idolised child, disturbed by the unusual whispering and talking, carried on within her nursery. Diana paused a moment—she heard the nurse go to comfort the poor little desolate—and then she flew to her own room, and strove to put away both sound and thought.

Oh! the horrors of that dreadful night. Go where she would, turn which way she might, a face ghastly, cold, and still, was ever before her. She could not forget it, she could not put the dead away. When she tried to close her eyes, it was there still, if a fitful slumber,

for the moment, enchained her senses, it was yet there, or even worse, changed for the nonce, into the distorted features, and convulsed form, she had seen writhing in agony.

CHAPTER IV.

This rosary
Three years ago you hung it round my neck—
I recollect that. Oh! the wing of time,
'Tis fledged with arrows.

ANON.

Oh! the great force that sleeps in woman's heart!
She will at least behold that form once more;
See its last vestige from her world depart.

KING ARTHUR.

DAY succeeded night, and dragged its weary length slowly on. It was sad to see Lady Stanford's efforts to be resigned, to watch her anxiety to be with her husband, and she so powerless.

Diana longed for Frank's arrival—she knew he could do nothing—but she pinned her faith

on him, pined even to see his face. About the middle of the day, she heard a suppressed bustle in the hall, and fancied he was come. She had reached the foot of the stairs, when she met Collins. He closed the door into the hall.

"It is the jury, Miss Gresham, and the coroner come to view the body," whispered he, apologetically.

She leant against the banisters, faint, and sick at heart. That she should live to see this day!

The man noticed the agonised expression on her face; he did not know that even Lady Stanford had never asked for particulars. Her son was dead, what recked it how? He hastened, as he thought, to relieve her anxieties.

"They are sure to bring it in 'Accidental Death,'" said he, eagerly. "I went up with them myself to see the spot where my poor young master was found. There were the marks quite plain, his foot slipped, and he fell;

there were no signs of anything like a struggle. Kidd says, there are always pheasants to be seen feeding over the fence in the shady walk, and he's sure Mr. Gresham was getting over the hedge with his gun in full cock, and he has sworn he has told him of it a score of times. The stock must have caught in the bushes, that's how it was, it's as plain as noonday, for all the Coroner—"

Collins stopped, for he saw his auditor was trembling from head to foot.

"Lord have mercy! Oh, Miss Gresham! sit down, and let me call Mrs. Norton."

She put her handkerchief to her mouth, for the muscles twitched convulsively, and, with a great effort, spoke.

"It is nothing. Let me know when Mr. Frank arrives."

And she turned back again.

The messenger had followed Frank down into Leicestershire, and at dusk, that day, he arrived. The man reported, that when he told

Mr. Frank what had happened, he was "dreadful cut up;" and the sight of the house, of his sister's silent grief, of the bereaved mother's flowing tears, affected him powerfully. He could not bear to think of his past estrangement from his old playfellow and cousin; he blamed and reproached himself bitterly, and felt it all the more that he dared not talk it off with Diana. Nor did he like to speak of an incident which weighed heavily on his mind, which was this. Frank had slept in Leamington the night after the ball, and early on the following morning, he had been aroused from his slumbers by a visit from his cousin. Lionel had insisted on coming to his room, despite of all that waiters and chambermaids could say to the contrary. In former days, such an untimely visit would not have surprised him; but Frank rubbed his eyes, and half believed he was dreaming, when he saw Lionel standing at his bed-side.

His visitor was somewhat agitated, as after

a slight apology for his intrusion, he asked Frank, as a personal favour to himself, as also for the sake of their relationship, to do him a service. It is needless to say that Frank, though much surprised, readily pledged himself to do all that lay in his power.

"It is only a trifle," said his unhappy cousin, though his looks belied his words; "but will you immediately ascertain whether the Vicomte de Chavigny is still in Leamington?"

Frank sprang up. He forgot his rankling anger against his cousin.

"My dear fellow, Chavigny is known to be a coward—he will never fight unless he is obliged."

"I am the last person to force a quarrel on any man, thinking as I do on the subject of duelling," returnel Lionel; "but I must find out whether this man is really gone."

Frank looked enquiringly at his cousin.

"You have every right to ask me for an

explanation of the matter," continued Lionel. "Still I know you will not press for it, when I tell you, that another besides myself—another, whom I am most anxious to screen—is concerned in this affair."

"Do not trouble yourself with apologies," said Frank, good-humouredly; "a secret is not a secret if too many people are let into it."

"You are not known here," proceeded Lionel, after a moment's thought; "and if you could make these enquiries without allowing your name to transpire—"

"Yes, yes, I see, it is the same as your own," interrupted Frank.

"I ought to thank you—" began Lionel.

"Never mind that, old fellow; you would do the same for me," said Frank, trying to carry off lightly, what he felt painfully.

"Good-bye, Frank. God bless you!"

And his cousin pressed his hand fervently.

A couple of hours after, Frank called in

York Terrace, the servant said his master was "particularly engaged."

"Never mind," remarked the visitor; "this note will do my business, only be sure you give it yourself into Mr. Gresham's own hand."

It simply contained the intelligence that M. de Chavigny had left Leamington by the early morning train.

If Frank suspected what the reader knows to be the case, it cannot be wondered at. He had seen a good deal of Florence at one time; and, perhaps, upon reflection, understood her now better than he did, in the early part of their acquaintance. His communings, as he walked back to his hotel, were concentrated in a pithy and not over polite sentence, uttered, half aloud, as he walked up the steps—

"If a woman is a 'bad un,' she is the very—"

We need not finish the speech, he forgot to conclude.

It was near midnight before Lord Stanford

came. Diana was in the dressing-room, trying to soothe the unhappy mother, whom expectation and anticipation made doubly nervous. No noise or bustle had marked his arrival, his heavy step, in the corridor, alone announced him; and as he entered by one door, Diana escaped by the other.

She was sitting with her brother, half-an-hour later, who had already seen his uncle, when she was summoned to the dressing-room.

Lord Stanford came forward to meet her, with outstretched hand.

"How are you, Di?" said he, in just his usual tranquil manner.

The next moment he had caught her in his arms, and was sobbing over her like a child; and then Diana, with her hands clasped round his neck, wept too.

With these tardy, flowing tears, she thought the bitterness of death had passed. It was not

so. In her own room, where, at least, she thought they might flow unmarked, she found Mrs. Norton awaiting her.

"I asked Harris to let me come to you to-night, instead of her," said the housekeeper, apologetically.

"Thank you, it is late; I do not want any assistance. Good night," answered the poor girl, driving back her tears.

Mrs. Norton understood that she was dismissed, still she did not go. Finding she lingered, Diana looked round.

"Forgive me, Miss Gresham, but, but—," her rising tears would not allow her to proceed.

Di tried to say something kind, but neither could she command her voice.

The grey haired, trembling woman held out towards her, a small gold locket.

"I found it round my poor young master's neck."

When she had placed it in Miss Gresham's hand, she went on as though fearful of interruption.

"Three years ago last summer, the very day before he left home, when I was in Mr. Gresham's room, looking over his things, he asked me to sew the locket to that chain."

She added something more about not having allowed the women in attendance to see it, but Diana did not heed her. She held in her hand the tarnished, time-worn token of a love, which had died almost as violent a death, as he on whose heart it rested, when he met with his untimely end. How well she remembered it! And the day he had first spoken to her of a love, which, they then fondly thought, was to entwine their lives together. They had been riding, in company, to a neighbouring town, and in the little old-fashioned jeweller's shop, they had exchanged love tokens, and the rough, unskilled hand of its ancient proprietor had

woven the locks of dark and fair hair together, and bound them with a gold thread, in rude workmanship, figuring forth the initials of 'L. and D. G.,' a name, he, whose heart then beat so warmly with the joys of loving youth, had said, "should be her's for ever."

Quiet, silent tears rolled down her cheeks, as she gazed on it, and recalled the past. And the chain too, she had made it for him that happy Christmas, when she had come home from school for the last time, a frail and worn memorial it was of joyous days, when they had lived in the present, and looked not on the past or future.

Mrs. Norton was stealing out of the room, when Diana roused herself from her mournful reverie, and called her back.

"I have no right to this," said she, in a sad but firm voice.

The enquiry of "who has, if you have not?" rose to the old woman's lips, but something in the young sorrowing face checked her.

"Take it, to-morrow, to Lady Stanford," faltered Miss Gresham.

Mrs. Norton shook her head.

"I dare not, it would but add to her grief to think of what might have been."

She paused, there was something of hesitation in the countenance bent upon her. The kind-hearted, romantic old housekeeper little guessed its import.

Turning towards the toilet-table, Diana Gresham unlocked a small casket, and from its innermost recess, drew forth a long-hidden, and once cherished relic of early dreams. When she advanced towards her, Mrs. Norton saw that there were two lockets in her hand, instead of one. Diana looked on both, for an instant, with unmistakeable anguish impressed on every feature. She moved towards the door, signing for the woman to accompany her. Bearing the light high in her hand, and marvelling as to whither this sudden impulse hurried that slight, quivering form, she followed.

At the door of Lord Stanford's dressing-room Miss Gresham paused.

"My lord has retired," whispered the attendant, answering to her look, for she spoke not.

On they went, down the wide staircase, across the sounding, echoing, marble hall, and passed into the further wing; then Mrs. Norton knew their destination. In the room adjoining that of death sat silent, drowsy watchers, and the housekeeper, shrewd and discreet, closed the door of communication.

The chamber they entered presented a very different aspect from that it wore on the preceding day. It was duly set in order, no signs of life or of occupation marred its neat precision. It was light—almost as light as day, for large wax candles burned on every table, and on each side of the simple tent bed. That too was altered, for the white coverlid was replaced by a dark heavy pall, on which rested a crimson velvet and richly studded

coffin. Those, who, in the absence of Lord Stanford, had ordered all, deemed it fitting to pay every outward honor, to lavish all the costly panoply of woe on him, whose mortal body, now clad in the vestments of the grave, held not the immortal spirit, which already soared far above these poor and sordid tokens of miserable earthly grandeur.

With reverend hand, Mrs. Norton removed the covering from the face of the dead; the features which had looked so beautiful, so calm in their repose but yesterday, seemed more thin and sharp to-day. Death, and death unmistakeable, had set his seal on each, had fixed even the sweet smile upon the white, cold lips. Almost involuntarily, Diana sank upon her knees, and covered her face with her hands, even the tender remembrance of earthly love, which that little incident had brought back to life, seemed like profanation in that hallowed presence. He, whose desertion had saddened her early life, and darkened her path, was for-

gotten, passion lives not in the grave, it was the loved cousin, who had played with her in childhood, whose affection had made her first days of youth so bright, for whom she wept such sad, sad, tears. His death had effaced all mournful memories of the years, which had intervened, the joys and sorrows of the past had vanished together like the mist of yesterday, and as the voiceless prayer of heart and lips rose to heaven, she could afford to breathe a pitying sigh for the wife Lionel's death had widowed. There was no bitterness in her thoughts of Florence now.

She rose, and with a simple solemnity and majesty of demeanour, which impressed Mrs. Norton more than any words could have done, laid both the symbols of this early love, back upon the cold, lifeless heart, whence the one had been taken.

"Poor dear! poor young gentleman!" sobbed the housekeeper, "he has nothing to trouble him now. Perhaps it is as well, for

he has been sorely vexed and tried at times! God knows best, and He has taken him away, it may be, from worse sorrow to come, but my poor lady!"

Miss Gresham did not seem to mark her words. She bent down, pressed one last long kiss on the still, marble brow, reverently wiped the tears that had fallen on her cousin's cheek, and passed out of his presence, never to enter it more, till that awful day comes "when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed."

* * * *

The idea that their son had died by his own hand, happily, never presented itself to the minds of either Lord or Lady Stanford. There were those, however, who asserted that this was the case, and so prevalent was the rumour that it reached even Frank Gresham's ears. Some casual remarks made by an over busy, officious coroner, were the true basis of this report;

and though a jury of men who had known the unhappy Lionel all his life, scouted the bare suggestion, still it had crept into print, and Frank was thankful enough to see his uncle fold and lay aside unread, every newspaper which treated of the particulars of an event which filled the *County Chronicle and Guardian*, and which, at this dull season of the year, was quite a resource even to the daily London journals. Lord Stanford was not a man who could endure the thought of his private sorrow being converted into a matter of public interest.

Frank neither could nor would allow himself to give credence for a moment to the harrowing idea of his cousin's suicide; still, his mind dwelt with awe, almost with horror, on the visible change which had crept, in the course of the last year, over the gay companion of his childhood. He had not seen enough of Lionel ot mark the ebb and flow of better feelings during the last few months, the remembrance of which now brought so much peace and com-

fort to his sorrowing mother's heart. Poor Lady Stanford! she had almost come to rejoice that her son's short life had not been one of cloudless sunshine, since in sorrow and in sadness he had learnt so well the lesson that this world is not our rest.

During the long, sad week that elapsed ere the grave received its prey, and the one cousin was laid in the tomb of his ancestors, the other was the victim of many a bitter pang of self-reproach, and many a sad and painful thought. There was something so inexpressibly awful and affecting in this sudden termination to a life which ought to have been so happy. But had Lionel's life been happy? If Frank could have forgotten the face whose melancholy seemed to foreshadow this early doom, he might have thought that Lionel, as an only son, and surrounded by all that most men covet, must have led a happy, joyous existence. As it was, the conviction, which would not be shaken off, that his cousin's path had been darkened by some secret

sorrow, poisoned by some gnawing grief, added a ten-fold bitterness to his own remorse and regret.

He never, for a moment, believed but that Lionel's death had been the result of a most unfortunate accident; still he could not banish from his mind their last, painful meeting. Poor Lionel's mournful words seemed indelibly stamped upon his memory. The half expressed half-concealed anxiety, he had testified concerning M. de Chavigny, assumed a portentous meaning now that he who had uttered them was numbered with the dead; and, though the idea, which for an instant presented itself, that his cousin's blood was on the head, if it had not stained the hands, of the Vicomte de Chavigny, was on reflection scouted as chimerical, yet Frank could not feel at ease with respect to one, who, at any rate, had in some sort troubled his unhappy cousin's last days on earth.

This was the only tangible point upon which his suspicions could take hold; and, at last, in a fit of desperation, Frank resolved to go to Lon-

don and ascertain whether M. de Chavigny had really left England. It was not difficult to frame an excuse for a short absence. The first person he met was a man who had been hunting, from Leamington, all the winter; and who, animated by curiosity, touching an event, which had excited no little sensation in the society of that place, made the best of a slight acquaintance with Frank Gresham, and joined him as he was walking down St. James'-street. Affliction softens the heart, and brings all men nearer to their proper level; and Frank, accordingly, who was generally prone to think too much of his own dignity, stood talking with a person, whom perhaps a fortnight before, he would have thought beneath his notice.

Mr. Hillary was a regular sporting character; rough in exterior, but kind at heart, and he spoke with enough feeling to gratify Frank, of what had happened. As they were talking, he made a sort of half doubtful acknowledgment to the salutation of some person crossing

the street. Frank involuntarily looked round. On seeing who it was, he almost started, and some sort of exclamation passed his lips.

"Yes, it's the Frenchman," said his companion.

"Somehow I fancied he had left England," remarked Frank; his eyes following the retreating figure.

"He only went as far as Paris, and back again," said Mr. Hillary; "but he is a shilly-shally fellow, here to-day and gone to-morrow, and I should not believe he had ever really meant to go if I did not know a fellow who crossed with him to Folkestone; and who, Heaven knows why, he asked to stay with him in Paris; and when he had been with him a week, as suddenly changed his mind, and started off back again. Why," proceeded he, taking Frank by the button, Frank, whose mind was so relieved by hearing this fact, that he could have listened for an hour, "why," repeated he, "it's hardly a fortnight since he

wrote to me from Boulogne, saying that he had left rather a neat hack of his at Leamington, and that, as I had fancied the beast, I might have it at a low figure, for he was going abroad and not likely to return. I was away for a few days, while the frost lasted, and when I got back I went straight to the livery-stables, with a cheque in my pocket, when who should I see coming out of the stable but the Vicomte himself, as they call him."

"At Leamington!" exclaimed Frank.

Mr. Hillary nodded, and went on with his tale.

"Would you believe it? he cried off from his bargain; and there stands the nag eating his head off, for Chavigny's never been on his back since. I can't think what the fellow's after," continued the hearty fox-hunter, "for to my certain knowledge, he's been down to Leamington twice since then, though only for a day. Some people say there's a lady in the case."

Mr. Hillary suddenly remembered who that lady was, turned very red and apoplectic, stammered a little, and after having emphatically, and pithily, consigned all foreigners to the infernal regions, hastily bid Frank "good-day," and walked on.

Frank's face was very nearly as crimson as his informant's.

"It cannot be true," said he to himself, as he sat meditating over his newspaper. "It's not in nature; people may talk—and of course everything is remembered and raked up against her now—but, before poor Lionel is cold in his grave—no, no, Florence may have quarrelled with him in life, but, now he is dead, she must mourn him."

CHAPTER V.

Herman.—Too late! the ceremony is fulfilled.

See how his head is bowed! Go, speak to him;
Ask him what thoughts this marriage raises up.
THE NOBLE HEART—A Tragedy.

His son's death did not make so great an external change in Lord Stanford as people had anticipated. His tall frame was as unbending and upright—his step was as firm and hard as ever. His was not the shuffling, uncertain tread of a man verging on three-score years and ten, and weighed down by grief. Even on the day when his son's remains were committed to their kindred dust, he bore up bravely. There was not a dry eye among the tenants who stood around that yawning grave; but Lord Stanford shed not a single tear. The service over, un-

assisted he descended into the chilly vault to look his last on the spot where they had laid the young head of his only son. As he turned to re-ascend the steep steps, it was remarked that he stretched forth his hands, as the blind do, groping in the dark; but he would accept of no aid, not even that of his favourite nephew, though it was said by the servants of the Great House, that their lord "could not now bear Mr. Frank out of his sight."

Still there was a change, if few marked it. Lord Stanford might force himself to resume his outward habits, and daily mode of life. He might be stern and unflinching towards himself still, but his heart had softened towards others, and it might be past recollections, the thoughts of what *once* had been, which made him testify so much tenderness and gentleness towards Diana; but he showed quite as much affection, though in a different way, towards her brother Frank—Frank, who was now the heir of both estate and title,

though his sensitive feelings could hardly brook the thought that he occupied his cousin's place.

With all his real kindness of heart, Lord Stanford had always been cold and austere in manner, and severe in judging of the faults and follies of others; and to no one had he hitherto meted out a more scanty measure of consideration than towards his daughter-in-law. The alteration in his feelings towards Florence was, therefore, the more marked, and it was evident that he intended that it should be apparent, and that he wished by thus openly repairing his former harshness, in some sort, to expiate the wrong with which his conscience now reproached him. It seemed, too, as if he would fain make atonement to the widowed wife for the severity he had of late testified towards her husband. With his own hand he wrote letters full of kindness and commiseration to Florence, speaking of her affliction as theirs

also, and pressing her to come to Sutton Priors, entreating her, as he had never done before, to consider it her home, making her doing so an act of favour towards himself and Lady Stanford, and pledging himself that even there she should live as retired from her husband's parents as she chose. In pecuniary matters he showed unwonted liberality, saying of course it was for him to arrange Lionel's affairs; she need not even trouble herself to go into them; but that from the day of her husband's death, her settlement should be hers unfettered, and more too if she required it. There was nothing Lord Stanford did not propose to lavish on the bereaved wife of his only son.

The first moment he could leave Sutton Priors, Lord Stanford professed himself ready to go down to Leamington, and would have done so, had not Lady Vaughan strongly advised his allowing her daughter to recover from the first shock, ere he proposed seeing

her. Up to this period, Lord Stanford had, as far as possible, negatived the fact of Lady Vaughan's existence; he had never chosen to recognise it, or to receive her, but now there was hardly a day that letters did not pass between them, for her mother said Florence was far too nervous to write herself.

If Lady Stanford were better advised on some points than her Lord, none the less did she participate in these feelings. She could imagine how boundless and how violent must be the sorrow and remorse of the unloving wife, now that death and eternal separation had come hand-in-hand to melt the icy heart, which careless ease had frozen at its fount. She did not pity Florence the less, that it was evident, through all Lady Vaughan's excuses and reasons that she really shrunk with repugnance from seeing her child, that child whose very presence must be a tacit reproof, and whose childish face grew daily more and more like what her

dead father's had been, save that the sadness which had darkened poor Lionel's expressive countenance, was not found in that of his happy little daughter.

At last, after the lapse of more than a month, the long looked for letter from Florence herself came. Lord Stanford was quite agitated when he hurried up with the deep black bordered missive into his wife's room.

"Some people have not the knack of expressing their feelings," said he, doubtfully, so soon as Lady Stanford had come to the end of the one meagre note sheet.

"It is as you say; I would always rather see Florence than read her letters," was the answer given in the quiet manner of one, who has been taught patience by long suffering, "I hope now we shall soon meet," continued Lady Stanford.

"Let me see, she comes to London on the 15th, that is Saturday week. Well, I shall go to town on the following Monday," re-

joined Lord Stanford, thoughtfully. "But I think it will be better to say nothing about it. Poor Florence! from what Lady Vaughan says, and from the uncertain tone of her own letter, it is evident this shock has made her sadly nervous." Lord Stanford's own voice was somewhat tremulous, "I shall go up straight without announcing myself; and thus spare her all preparation, it will be the wiser plan."

"If you could only prevail on her to come here," sighed Lady Stanford, "to postpone what must be an effort only increases Florence's very natural dread."

"I shall persuade her to return with me," replied her lord.

"And Lady Vaughan?" asked Lady Stanford.

"I should be glad if she would accompany her daughter," was the decided answer. "Let bygones be bygones—this is not a time to remember the faults of others," he paused,

' certainly not those of one who was so near a relation to *him*."

A project once devised, was as good as executed with Lord Stanford. He should go to town on the 17th, and on the 18th return with his daughter-in-law.

Our heroine, meanwhile, had given many a longing, lingering thought to her home at Furley; but she had been content to stay on at Sutton Priors, from day to day, and week to week, for Lady Stanford's sake, who could not bear to hear her speak of leaving her. In the bitterest hour of her sorrow and bereavement Diana had been with her, and she clung to her now with redoubled tenderness; it was almost as if she had transferred to her a portion of the passionate affection with which she had regarded her son. It was a strange bond of union which bound so closely those two feminine hearts. With the one, the day had passed, the night was at hand, and there was no gladness save that of the morning

which was yet afar, the morning, which after years of quiet, silent watching, would break in heaven.

Over the head of the younger few years had rolled; but they had been years of sadness and of trial, which had gradually attuned her heart to higher strains than those which had first charmed her fancy. Life was not closing, but opening out for her; the fervid hues, the vivid colouring, with which early romance had tinged its dawn, had died out and paled away in distance, and the dull, dark clouds, which had dimmed those early glories, had descended on her head; but as with mother earth, so with her child, the storm had refreshed and reinvigorated the parched and arid soil, and already though she saw it not, the sun was shining with undiminished brightness through the dark masses which were fast dispersing in the horizon of the future. The bias of Diana Gresham's mind had ever been towards the sublime, and

this last grief failing to crush had left behind a tender charm, a softness and a subduing womanliness, felt by all, understood only by the few.

Despite the silent harmony which reigned within, it was with a heaviness of spirit, and a pang at heart, which almost amounted to a sense of acute pain, that our heroine bade adieu to Sutton Priors. It was no relief to her, but rather a fresh grief to leave the house of mourning, and take once more her place in common life. But so it must be; she had other duties, other ties, Florence surely would amply fill her place, and supply the companionship Lady Stanford needed; and Diana hoped that in consoling her anguish, in alleviating her sorrow, the bereaved parents would find comfort.

On the morning that Lord Stanford travelled up to London, Diana, accordingly, took her departure in a contrary direction. Fifteen miles in her uncle's carriage was not a very awful

journey; but, at the last moment, she was deprived of Frank's company, Lord Stanford having unexpectedly expressed a wish that he should stay for a day or two longer; he said little about it; but it was evident he was beginning to dread the outbreak of grief, which must attend his daughter-in-law's first return to a spot, where her husband had breathed his last.

Lady Stanford felt more than relieved that he had staid, when, the evening of the same day, just as she and Frank had finished their *tête-à-tête* dinner, carriage wheels rattled sharply and quickly under the portico. The servants hurried to the door, almost before the noisy summons bade them.

"She is come!" exclaimed Lady Stanford, turning pale, as she heard her husband's step amid the confusion.

Frank had, by this time, reached the door.

"It is only my uncle," rejoined he.

And before he had time to say more, Lord Stanford strode into the room. He paused beside his wife's chair.

"You did not expect me?" he said, gently.

"I did not think you would have come alone."

"Nor I. Dinner," added he, addressing the retreating Collins.

Now that the servants were gone, Lady Stanford expected that he would speak; but, on the contrary, her lord muttering something about dressing, left the room, only to return to it again, as the soup was being placed upon the table.

It was not Lord Stanford's custom to be very communicative; but to-day he was more laconic than usual; no one liked to speak before the servants of the one source of interest shared alike by all; and, after a few ordinary enquiries respecting the trains by

which he had travelled, and remarks upon the weather, this feeble attempt at conversation degenerated into entire silence.

Lord Stanford's dinner was not soon over. Frank observed, however, that there was more ceremony about it than appetite; and from his uncle's face, he divined that the events of the morning had been painful in the extreme. The white shaggy brows were never, for a moment, unbent, the ample forehead was furrowed with thought, and the lips wore the thin, pale appearance, which, those who knew him well, were aware always indicated an unusual disturbance in Lord Stanford's mind.

At last, after, as it appeared to the anxious wife, an interminable period of suspense, the dessert was placed upon the table, and the attendants left the room. Lady Stanford had moved to an arm-chair by the fire, towards which her lord now turned, also. He stirred the already blazing fuel, but did not speak, nor did he resume his place.

Lady Stanford could bear it no longer.

"You have seen poor Florence?" began she, tremulously.

"No, I have not."

"She did not come to town then on Saturday, after all?" persisted Lady Stanford.

She began to think she must have mistaken the expression on her husband's face.

Lord Stanford reseated himself with a heavy sigh.

"She did come; but I was just too late."

Lady Stanford saw that something was terribly amiss; she began to fear that some other dreadful catastrophe had overtaken their house. She could no longer command her own voice, but looked imploringly at Frank.

His nephew's words broke the spell.

Lord Stanford burst forth with—

"Never let me hear her spoken of by that name again! she is my son's wife no longer—she is as dead to me and mine, as—as—"

He almost sobbed out his last words, though

no tears dimmed the flashing glances of his keen, grey eyes.

Frank sprang to his feet.

"Who is it? what is it?" cried he, passionately; "not that villain Chavigny! He shall answer to me for this."

His uncle's hand upon his arm checked his fiery speech.

"There is no need for investigation. Your hands, my hands, are alike tied, it is not for us, by puerile vengeance, to do aught which can cast the shadow of a reproach upon the stainless memory of the dead."

His features worked convulsively, his eyes suffused, as he looked on the portrait of his son. The full length painting of Lionel, which hung over the fire-place, had been taken at the happiest period of his life, just when boyhood was merging into manhood, and about the mute lips played a sweet smile, while there was a softness in the dark lustrous eyes, which now seemed prophetic of melancholy to

those who sadly thought on what he since had been. There was no trace of angry passions in the life-like face, which looked down so calmly, and so lovingly on the startled, agitated group which sat beneath its shadow.

But not immediately could Lord Stanford find voice to speak, and even now, when he nerved himself to relate the incidents of the day, had it not been for Frank, he had hardly made himself intelligible to the agonised mother. Frank could supply all the evidence which was lacking; as, in broken words, and half-finished sentences, for his soul revolted from the task, Lord Stanford told the tale of vanity and falsehood, the last mad act of which we now proceed to lay before the reader.

At noon that day, the strong man had stood trembling and anxious on the threshold, where once his son had dwelt; that threshold, which, not an hour before, had, for the last time, been pressed by the feet of the weak woman he came to comfort.

It was not any well-known face which responded to Lord Stanford's twice repeated summons. Florence had taken care to leave those on whose countenances she might read reproach and suspicion, behind at Leamington, but an old and smooth-spoken foreigner, Lady Vaughan's courier, so, at least, Lord Stanford fancied.

"Is Mrs. Gresham at home?"

"No, sir."

But the man looked undecided.

"I am aware that she does not receive visitors; but if she is arrived, I am sure she will see me."

And Lord Stanford walked into the house.

"*Madame est partie*;" and barring his further progress, the man had recourse to his native tongue, and explained himself, greatly to his own satisfaction; but "*ce matin*—Paris —baggage—*Miladi* Vaughan," were the only comprehensible words which smote on Lord Stanford's ear.

He caught at the last.

"Ah! Lady Vaughan, is she in the house?"

"*Mais oui!*"

And the Frenchman shrugged his shoulders in despair at the small effect his words had produced.

"Could I see her alone, without Mrs. Gresham's knowledge?"

And Lord Stanford glanced towards the dining-room door.

No one could have mistaken Lord Stanford for anything but a gentleman, and that of the highest stamp; but when he took out a card, and clearly and distinctly requested it might be taken to Lady Vaughan, François' brown face assumed a very doubtful aspect.

Lord Stanford's mind was too full of painful recollections to think his absence long; but it was nearly ten minutes before François returned, and, with innumerable bows, ushered him up-stairs.

"You are come to reproach me?" uttered a feminine voice, as the door closed, and Lord Stanford, though the blinds were all half-closed, so as to obscure the room, had no difficulty in recognising the speaker.

Faded and wrinkled as she was, her once stately figure bent almost to deformity, with no one trace of youth, save a pair of flashing eyes, which unpleasantly marked her resemblance to her daughter, he knew her again! What a difference thirty years had made in the brilliant, courted beauty, on whom, as a young man, with no pretension to fashion, he had looked with veneration.

"It was not my fault—she did not even tell me—me, her own mother, of her purpose till this morning. I did my best to stop it—I warned her long ago, what a dangerous path she was treading, but it was no use, from a child Florence was always headstrong and wilful."

Lord Stanford was perfectly confounded as

he listened to this rambling, incoherent speech, with which tears and lamentations were freely mingled. A strong odour of ether pervaded the apartment, and his first idea was that Lady Vaughan had been drinking. He had heard of those, who, having forfeited place, position, and happiness, overcome with remorse, had had recourse to narcotics and stimulants, to drown their grief. He forgot that thirty years had passed.

"She does not think of *me*, she does not give one thought to her mother, all she lives for is to follow the bent of her own wayward humour."

If Lord Stanford had once thought the same, he had learnt to express himself more leniently.

"Pardon me," began he; "but I fear grief is but too apt to make us all selfish, and poor Florence's loss is so recent."

Lady Vaughan raised herself from the half recumbent position, which she had hitherto

maintained, and looked her visitor full in the face.

"You take her part? impossible! Do you know what has happened?" questioned she.

"I have buried my dead out of sight; but can I ever forget my son, or cease to feel for those he loved, ever speak with aught but tenderness of his wife?"

Lord Stanford expressed himself with a simple pathos so unlike the man he had been, that tears of sorrow replaced the tears of anger hardly dry on Lady Vaughan's cheek.

"It is too dreadful," sighed she, "it is more than I can bear."

"The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away." Lord Stanford thought her sorrow was for the Lionel, on whose memory he dwelt with such a constant, longing affection. He tried to impress on her his only source of consolation.

Lady Vaughan did not appear to notice this interruption.

"I, of course, thought you knew it, else what brought you here this day? Two hours ago, and you might have been in time to stop her," said she, complainingly.

Conscious at last that they were speaking at cross purposes, Lord Stanford was silent. Then he said—

"Can I see Florence?"

"See her!" almost shrieked Lady Vaughan, "have I not already told you she is gone?"

"Gone! gone where?" repeated Lord Stanford. He thought either his own brain must have tottered, or that this woman was mad, and really when overcome with hysteric passion, Lady Vaughan did appear bereft of her senses. Something in the cold, severe face before her quieted her violence.

"She left me this morning; she went out before breakfast, and told the maid she was going to church. She returned, but not alone, and informed me she had married the Vicomte de Chavigny."

It was now Lord Stanford's turn to tremble.

"Married!" repeated he vaguely. The stricken heart had neither word nor tear to express its agony in this consummation of miseries.

Lady Vaughan proceeded—

"It has been a deeply laid scheme, believe me. Now I come to inquire into it, I find she has deceived me from first to last."

Lord Stanford's face was hidden in his hands, but every word sank deeply into his heart, as Lady Vaughan rehearsed, in her own meandering fashion, all that had come to pass. Then he heard, for the first time, of the long estrangement between the husband and the wife, of the last angry parting which had preceded the sudden death of the one, of the secret meetings and correspondence with her lover, which, unknown till within the last hour, had ended in the ill-advised marriage of the other. In her anger and in her passion, there was not one of the daughter's faults or failings the mother

did not proclaim. Lord Stanford shrank in horror from a woman, who could so belie a parent's natural instinct. Selfish, worldly, and egotistical, Lady Vaughan only harped on the string that Florence's last act had been to order her to leave the house. In closing her connexion with her husband's family, she had desired her mother to quit the home of their providing.

Lord Stanford did not bid her stay, now that it had come to this. He could not bring himself to utter one word of sympathy to her who had been the great promoter of his son's unhappy marriage. He made no comment on the revelations she had indulged in; but as he rose to go, he hoarsely called on Lady Vaughan to remember that the curse of Heaven, though not invoked by him, would surely fall on one, who, in heart, if not in deed, had violated vows, whose sacred force, even the awful advent of death, had been powerless to enforce.

CHAPTER VI.

True love is like spirits ; spoken of by all, seen by few.

MAXIMS OF LA ROCHEFOUCAULT

WHEN the first shock was over, and they could reason calmly on what had taken place, it became the one great wish of both Lord and Lady Stanford, that the knowledge of this hurried re-marriage on the part of their son's wife should, as far as possible, be confined to the members of their own family. Miss Courtenay, nevertheless, fancied she was the first to apprise Mrs. Gresham of what had taken place, when at Easter she came to Furley, armed with a mysterious paragraph, cut out of a morning paper, which paragraph was speedily followed by an authorised announcement couched in due form, and evidently emanating

from the pen of Florence, now Vicomtesse de Chavigny.

This stimulated Lord Stanford into action; he had hitherto been passive, and content to let things take their natural course, but he felt that the time was come to secure Lionel's little daughter from ever becoming the prey of her most unnatural mother. Florence had never loved the child, but though Frank was heir to both title and estates, there was Lady Stanford's fortune of twenty thousand pounds, as well as a suitable provision, which had been made for poor Lionel's younger children, at the time of his marriage, which would all accrue to this poor baby, and in constituting her a sort of heiress, might, at Lord Stanford's death, if not before, tempt her to lay claim to the guardianship of her own neglected offspring.

Mrs. Gresham's handsome jointure had doubtless been the temptation which had drawn the Vicomte de Chavigny into matrimony, but if he were only half as extravagant and

lavish as his bride, and he had the character of spending freely and playing high, the time would come when any accession of income would be welcome to this well-matched pair.

Lord Stanford accordingly consulted his lawyer as to what steps he ought to take, and was soon apprised that the settlement on his daughter-in-law having been drawn up after, not prior, to her marriage, had, by an oversight, been so worded, that, in contracting another alliance, she had forfeited all legal claim to the jointure therein apportioned to her. Lord Stanford did not hesitate. Florence, it is true, had forfeited all claim upon his generosity, by the mercenary spirit in which she had herself acted, for, in leaving her husband's house, she had played the spoiler's part, and carried off every portable object of beauty or of value, not to mention that she had left behind her a sufficiency of debts, contracted in his name, and since his demise, to anger any parent.

But this dereliction on her part, did not, so Lord Stanford believed, sanction any violation of his former act and deed. He had authorised this settlement, and he would abide by it. He would not take advantage of a quibble of law to rob her of what was justly hers, but it gave him the opportunity he desired, of laying an embargo on her return to England, and what was more, of bribing her and her husband from henceforth to renounce any claim upon her child. He took care there should be no flaw in the deed, which consigned the guardianship of his little granddaughter to selected members of the Gresham family; he even inserted a clause, which would prevent her enjoying the income inherited from her grandmother, should she, on her coming of age, fall a prey to her mother's machinations. The perusal of poor Lionel's papers, which had fallen into his hands on Florence's departure, having given Lord Stanford very just views of the mercenary character, which might lead

her to simulate affection for the child, as she had done for its unhappy father.

While these transactions were providing Lord Stanford with occupation, and the material for bi-weekly letters to both Frank and his man of business, Miss Courtenay had descended upon the quiet inmates of Furley Cottage, and created a ferment in Mrs. Gresham's mind, at all events, if she might not justly take credit for having accelerated the progress of other affairs. She had always paid a yearly visit to Sutton Rectory, and she would have thought she had failed in duty—that was her watchword—had she ceased to do so, when Mrs. Gresham's circumstances had changed. She certainly paid her visit six months earlier this year than usual, but she really felt a good deal of anxiety respecting her niece, and not a little curiosity touching the present state of the Gresham family.

Mrs. Gresham, happily, was quite as ready to talk of Lionel's death, and so soon as it was

generally known of Florence's marriage, as Miss Courtenay could desire, but some intuitive perception made her aunt silent to Diana upon both of these exciting topics. She asked her niece to go back with her to London, but Diana's deep mourning was excuse enough, so Miss Courtenay staid another week to indemnify herself for this prospective loss of Diana's society.

The last days of April were warm, bright and sunny, and Miss Courtenay's favorite seat during the forenoon was in the cheerful, bow window, which faced the south, and looked over the pretty flower-garden to the sea beyond. This morning was a holiday in honour of Georgie's birthday, so Mrs. Gresham was seated in the drawing-room with her guest, talking over a variety of matters. Outside the window, were all the younger members of the family, clustered around their sister, who, with innumerable brown paper packets of seeds in her hands, was giving instructions to

her juvenile coadjutors in the art of horticulture. Alice and Fanny were soon busy, and Georgie made quite happy and important by being chartered to follow close after Diana, bearing a pinafore full of seeds and labels.

At last, Diana came up to the window.

"I hope you admire my hyacinths, they look happier than those you used to buy at Catleugh's, aunt Diana."

"So do you, my dear, look a great deal happier than you did last year," was on the tip of Miss Courtenay's tongue, but she softened down her retort into, "there is nothing worth looking at in London, is there, Di?"

Her niece laughed.

"The country certainly suits her better," said Mrs. Gresham, looking fondly and admiringly at her step-daughter, who with the soft bloom of health upon her cheeks, the clear light of youth in her eyes, and both face and

form animated by fresh air and exercise, certainly looked as pretty as needs be.

By one of those inexplicable inconsistencies which govern the human heart and frame, Di was not only looking better, but was really much happier than she had been throughout the past year, or even during that which had preceded it. The shock of her cousin's death, and his parents' intense anguish had taken her out of herself; compared with that, her father's peaceful end, and the pain of leaving her home, was but a light affliction, and could she rebel against the chastening hand, when they so meekly bowed beneath the rod? She came home with a subdued, not to say a chastened manner and bearing, but among the inmates of the cottage, there was none of that overpowering gaiety and mirth, which, to the sad, produces more depression. Diana had been always outwardly serene and calm, but now, day by day, some of the elastic spirits of her

age returned, it would have been strange, had not some joy been hers at last, for self had been the oblation she had offered up with the heart's blood and tears of others. The wild, passionate love of early youth had been utterly consumed in the furnace of affliction, so that not even its ashes remained to be stirred and kindled into life by this latest act of her who had supplanted her. She accepted the fact; she did not, even in the deepest recesses of her heart, argue on an event, which, to others, cast so much light on the inconsistencies of the past.

"I despaired in the autumn, of ever doing anything with the garden," said Di, surveying with satisfaction her flower beds, gay with hepaticas, American primroses, anemones, and flowering bulbs. "But I must confess everything is a fortnight or three weeks earlier here than they ever were at Sutton."

"Which do you consider the best, your

flower-garden, or Mr. Mohun's ?" enquired Miss Courtenay, with sly emphasis.

Her niece, all unconscious of any hidden sarcasm, answered unhesitatingly—

"Oh ! that at the Grange, do not you? I thought it the picture of an old garden the other day. Now uncle Stanford had these beds cut out only last year." She turned away to resume her labours.

"It is fortunate Di thinks so highly of Furley," remarked Miss Courtenay, drily, 'since I see every probability of her passing her life here."

"Not all her life," suggested Mrs. Gresham, by way of an amendment, "I hope, some day, Di will marry."

"I never said she would not; all I remarked was, that it is lucky she likes Furley," repeated Miss Courtenay.

Mrs. Gresham, who generally took what was said *au pied de la lettre*, said she thought so too.

Meanwhile, there had been an addition to the party on the lawn, whom Miss Courtenay put on her spectacles to observe.

"I need not ask who your visitor is, for I perceive that it is always the same. *Toujours Perdrix.*"

Mr. Mohun is a very good neighbour," returned Mrs. Gresham, "so kind and considerate."

"If calling every day, and at all hours, constitutes a good neighbour, I quite agree with you," retorted the shrewd woman of the world.

At this moment Basil came up to the window. He knew exactly which sash to open without incommoding the ladies by a draught. He stood leaning against the sill as he talked; but Miss Courtenay noticed that he looked longingly at the party on the grass-plot.

Diana was now tying up her hyacinths heavy with blossom.

At last he said—

"I am going to ride into Dimborough this afternoon; can I do anything for you, Mrs. Gresham?"

"Thank you; perhaps you will ask if there are any letters for us by the second post. Miss Courtenay, I know, expects some."

There was a courtesy in the way in which Basil undertook this little errand, which pleased the spinster lady, who had taken a great fancy to Mr. Mohun, even so long ago as the beginning of their acquaintance.

"Oh by the way, will you leave an order for me at North's?" said Mrs Gresham, opening her portfolio, "and Green has never got those things for me from London I ordered a week ago. I must write about them also."

"There is no hurry," said Basil. "I can wait; I do not start till late," and he shut down the window, evidently delighted at a de-

lay which enabled him to follow the bent of his own wishes.

Mrs. Gresham's pen flowed quickly; she had just finished in time to hear Miss Courtenay's soliloquy. "I had not been here two days before I saw how it was. Humph! I suppose 'a living dog is better than a dead lion!'"

Mrs. Gresham saw her guest expected this statement to be acquiesced in. "What did you say?" asked she.

Miss Courtenay repeated her last words.

Mrs. Gresham looked puzzled.

"See there," and Miss Courtenay pointed triumphantly out of the window.

Mrs. Gresham appeared none the wiser.

"Men don't hang about a house, and come in and out all day and every day, as Mr. Mohun does, for nothing," said Miss Courtenay, driven to an explanation.

"He is very kind to the children," said

Mrs. Gresham, "and he is such a nice friend for Frank."

"I did not say he was not. I think quite as highly of Mr. Mohun as you do; but Frank is not here just now, and Di is not one of the children," retorted Miss Courtenay.

A sudden sense of her meaning flashed on Mrs. Gresham's mind; she colored and remained silent.

"I don't suppose he comes here after you," persisted her tormentor, "nor is it likely he should be thinking of Alice; she is too young and not the sort of girl to pick up a lover so early. She is like Di, silent and quiet, and with a proper degree of self-respect already, very different from poor Milly." Miss Courtenay's tongue could lash cruelly when she chose. "It's Di, depend on it," continued she, "and happily nobody can say there is any harm in it, for the children are always of the party. But one day he starts with them because Georgie is afraid of the new

donkey, and then the primroses in Mr. Mohun's woods are finer than any others. Next he must show them where the best pebbles are to be found on the beach, or there are the caves in Liston bay to be explored, and they are so far off that he must go and take care of them all. Of course it's Di; no man would take all that trouble for a pack of children." Miss Courtenay was breathless, but triumphant at the end of her speech.

"It never struck me before," said Mrs. Gresham, meekly.

"Well, there's no harm done," was Miss Courtenay's consolatory answer. "He's a man of very good family, and that's the first thing to be thought of."

Mrs. Gresham was not an argumentative woman, and following out her own train of ideas, she rejoined—

"I must say, supposing you are right, this is entirely of Basil Mohun's own seeking, for

for what man that really loves, and true love is unmixed with one thought of self, what man, who has thus loved, is there, who has not felt the same disquietude?

CHAPTER VII.

A mighty pain to love it is,
And 'tis a pain that love to miss;
But of all pain the greatest pain
It is to love, and love in vain.

COWLEY.

——— After you were gone
I grew acquainted with my heart, and searched
What stirred it so! Alas! I found it love.

LONGFELLOW.

MISS COURTENAY had not bneen gone more than a fortnight before the *finale* arrived. Sir Gilbert Edmonstone had before written to tell his nephew he ought to come to town. He now urged him to do so without delay; he plainly told him that to run up for a day or two once a week, as he now did, was

but indifferently accomplishing his business, for if he was not more keen about it himself, it was useless his attempting to push his promotion as a diplomatist. There was reason in what he said, for an indefinite hope had induced Basil to bespeak his uncle's influence in endeavouring to change the sphere of his duties to a more habitable land, and now this letter coming upon Mrs. Gresham's altered manner had the effect of hurrying him to a decision.

He made up his mind he could not go to London while his fate hung in the balance. He felt that he had at last found that for which all his life he had longed; the ideal his soul had vainly imagined through such long, weary years; the one love of life beside which all other feelings are but fleeting shadows, a deep, lasting love, which would atone for every sorrow of the sterile past, filling the future with a steady embowering happiness, the elysium of a man, who, from

childhood, had never had a tender woman's heart to lean on, who had been thrust into the world early and alone to fight as best he might against the restless ambitions and disappointed hopes, the earth-stained vanities, and upward aspirations, which jostle the one against the other in that broad and barren highway. All this Diana Gresham might give him! All this, and more, Diana Gresham might be to him!

It was with some impatience that Basil waited for the hour when, as he well knew, he was most likely to find Diana alone; and Mrs. Gresham and the children hard at work in the adjoining schoolroom. In the interval, he made all his arrangements; he wrote to Sir Gilbert Edmonstone to say that he would be in Stanhope-street the next day but one; and when this was done he walked down to the cottage in somewhat excited, but still in hopeful spirits.

He was soon in the drawing-room, but it was

unoccupied; and, instead of her daughter, Mrs. Gresham came in from the school-room, leaving the door ajar, that she might still keep an eye on the progress of the lessons. Basil was so silent that she, at last, asked whether anything were the matter.

Having first answered in the negative, he spoke of his uncle's summons to London.

"Of course you go," said Mrs. Gresham.

"I must; but I shall only wish myself back again at Furley."

"We do not always know what is best for us," replied she. "All wrong, my dear Fanny, that sum will never be right; you had better wait till I come."

Mr. Mohun saw that he was not wanted. As he rose to depart, Mrs. Gresham asked if he had not met Diana, she was gone down to the village to see some of the old women.

"No," he had not, and in his heart he hoped he might have that good fortune as he went back.

But Diana returned to their early dinner without having seen him. Mrs. Gresham told her of Basil's visit.

"My dear, had you not better send back that portfolio of Mr. Mohun's drawings? When he once gets to London, he will not be likely to return for some time."

Diana obeyed; she looked over the drawings once more, tied the portfolio up again, placed it in the hall, and desired her gardener, little Dick, to carry it up to the Grange, when he went home from work in the evening. She little dreamt how many bitter thoughts he would carry with it to the owner.

Meanwhile, all Basil's thoughts centred in the cottage. He did not like to call there again, but in the afternoon he could not resist strolling out in that direction. A winding path, which skirted the cliff above the village, and passed just below Mrs. Gresham's garden, was the route he chose. It was a happy selection, for the first thing he saw from the rock-walk

was Mrs. Gresham's white pony, and herself, with Alice and Fanny, driving along the Dimborough-road; it was plain they were going for a long drive. When he reached the steps leading up to the cottage, he paused. Man though he was, he could not still the beating of his heart. The whole happiness of his life was staked on that die, and suppose he lost it. He had not much time for indecision, for, as he was hesitating, with hardly sufficient resolution to carry him past, and yet not enough to embolden him to enter the grounds, he heard the sounds of a gay childish voice, mingled with the merry barking of a dog, approaching. He had just enough presence of mind to make him feign to be walking on, when Diana Gresham, herself, appeared at the little wicket-gate.

Georgie was kind enough to run towards him, and to inform him they were going to walk to the cottages near the flag-staff, and ended by giving him a very cordial invitation to join the party. So Basil walked on with

them, marvelling whether he had most to fear or hope from Miss Gresham's tranquil, open manner. He might have sought it for a month, and not have found so good an opportunity as that which chance now threw in his way; for "Rough" hunted rabbits, and Georgie hunted Rough, the whole live long way.

They reached their destination, which was not half-a-mile off, and he had not yet broached the subject uppermost in his thoughts when Diana turned to him and said—

"I must go and see the poor boy who broke his leg; but do not let us keep you, you were *en route* for some point, I think," and without pausing for a reply she walked into the cottage.

He was standing talking to an old sailor when, half-an-hour after, she re-appeared. She reproved him gently for having waited and that sealed his fate. Georgie, meanwhile, clamorously entreated to go down to the beach; but her sister pleaded that she had been out

almost all day. She was too tired to walk on the shingle, the tide would not leave the sands for another hour.

The little girl ran on, and then Basil proffered his humble petition. It was expressed in very few words, uttered in one moment.

The look of blank surprise and astonishment, which passed over Diana's expressive face, was an answer in itself. Basil's quick heart required no other.

"I had, perhaps, no right to hope," began he, sadly.

"It is not a question of right," said she, interrupting him. "I regret—but I never—" she stopped abruptly, fearing to say either too little or too much.

His look was so eloquent with enquiry, that, with an effort, she proceeded, speaking hurriedly, and walking quickly—

"I never thought it possible that—that I, who have done with love, could inspire any such sentiment."

"Done with love!" repeated he, in amazement.

"Yes," said she, steadily, and gathering courage, this confession made, she went on—"Do not speak of this again—let us forget that this subject was ever broached between us, it would be better for us both; it will be, certainly, happier for me. I cannot afford to lose a friend," and she looked at him beseechingly.

"Forget!" replied he, "it is easily said, but not so easily done. It is not difficult for those to whom love is a mere pastime—an episode which fills up an idle hour—to forget, but mine is no boyish passion, of which days, and weeks of distraction and amusement will efface the traces as surely as does yonder sea the footprints on the sand."

A sigh from his companion checked him.

"I, too," continued he, after waiting in vain for her to speak; and with a proud humility, which Diana could not but admire. "I, too, in the turbulent days of my youth, have ad-

mired, and paid homage, to the charms of other women; but it was a mere passing liking—an instinct, not a feeling, unworthy of being dignified with the sacred name of love—love as I feel it now. Till I saw you I had dreamed of such an out-pouring of the soul, but I never found her with whom I imagined I could exchange heart for heart, life for life, and think an eternity all too short to live in the sunshine of her presence."

For the first time in her life Diana was met by a burst of passion, beside which her own warmth of feeling appeared to her cold and chill. She had hitherto stifled all emotions, because she believed none could reciprocate them in all their force. She trembled with affright as she listened to the storm awakened within her own heart.

"What can I do? what can I say?" faltered she. Her self-command, her pride, her stateliness, had alike vanished; she was awed and perfectly overwhelmed by the height and

depth of the immeasurable passion she had inspired.

"Nothing," returned he, dejectedly, "which can reconcile me to my fate. I prayed for that which must be freely given, not wrung forth by importunities. All that I now ask is, that you will think kindly of the love you have rejected." He paused in evident struggle. "But do not expect me to veil my feelings under the lukewarm garb of friendship. I could not do it—I could not bear to see another occupying the place in your estimation I have so madly aspired to attain."

"I did not mean to pain you," said Diana, with a mixture of sadness and gentleness in her manner, which did little to heal the wound she had inflicted; "but I cannot help wishing to go back, if only to yesterday."

"Ah! and to-morrow it would be something less than friendship for me, something more for some other. I can bear in silence and alone, but I could not give place to any other man,"

said he, with that pride of manner, which is, strange to say, to women all-subduing.

"One thing before we part," said Diana, for they were nearing her home, and she now spoke with a certain tremulousness of manner. "You have misunderstood my words—there is no other. I too have been unhappy; I hoped the bond of a common suffering might be to us the bond of a calm, lasting friendship."

As she turned away, he caught her hand.

"No, no, do not leave me thus. I know I have no right to ask, but in mercy answer me this. You surely spoke of love; you acknowledged you have suffered?"

She turned her face full towards him, and once she raised her eyes.

"But one human being has ever spoken to me as you have done. His was, possibly, the boyish love you spoke of but now—it was not mine for long—still, such as it was, I prized it till I came to know that, like a flower, it had bloomed brightly only to fade and wither. Time

brought me strength, and I learnt once more to think of him only as the companion of my childhood. And then death came to consecrate all memories, and bury alike all sad and sweet retrospection in the stillness of the grave."

Basil understood it all now.

"Forgive me," murmured he, as he bent down, and pressed one long, fervent kiss on the hand he held.

Her farewell was so calm that he never dreamed she felt aught for him — never divined that the passionate fervour of his love had wakened into conscious life, feelings, of whose lurking existence she had never, till that moment been aware. He watched her as she went quietly in-doors. Georgie and Rough were left to their play on the lawn, and Diana sat down in the deserted drawing-room. How long she sat there she did not know; Mrs. Gresham's voice in the lobby first

aroused her, and she flew out of the opposite door, up stairs, and into her own room. The sight of her own ungloved hand brought a burst of refreshing tears, the first soft tears she had shed for many a long day, and yet Di blushed to think that she had yielded to so womanish a weakness.

At dusk that evening, our heroine was standing at the drawing-room window.

"Oh! that portfolio," exclaimed she, suddenly, and hastening towards the door.

"It is gone," said Mrs. Gresham; "I met Dick going without it, and sent him back for it."

"Then he must have received it by this time."

"My dear?" said Mrs. Gresham, wonderingly, but Diana had gone back to her musings in the twilight.

She was right. Basil Mohun, at that moment, was sitting moodily over the fire, heedless of the wine and dessert Demetrius had carefully placed beside him.

"From Miss Gresham, sir," said Mrs. Brown.

Basil sprang to his feet, and stretched out his hand eagerly.

"It is heavy, sir," and the old woman handed him the portfolio.

"No message?" said he, in a tone of disappointment.

"Only compliments and thanks, sir," and the housekeeper departed.

Her young master thrust the portfolio out of his sight.

"Compliments," repeated he, almost fiercely. "She might have spared me this; she need not have sent it back this night. So much for professions of friendship on such occasions. I know the world better than she does," and Basil sighed heavily.

CHAPTER VIII.

'Tis a midsummer day—
All London is gay—
For June is the season of active display:
Fetes, concerts, and flower-shows all in full sway.

FRASER'S MAGAZINE.

THE next day was a nervous one for Diana. She might have spared herself all her tremours and watchings, for Mr. Mohun never came near the Cottage, and even Georgie, at whom her sisters laughed for begging old nurse to take her into the shrubberies of the Grange, where they had permission to walk, did not catch a glimpse of the friend, to whom she was devoted. Nothing more was heard of Basil, till the man who had taken his riding horse to the station brought a note to Mrs.

Gresham on the following evening, and announced that his master had left the country.

A few lines of adieu, and that was all.

Our heroine had now ample opportunities for forgetting him, on whom her thoughts so often dwelt, and to whom they recurred so readily, more so even than she wished, but, perhaps, as Mrs. Gresham repeatedly said, with no friends and no acquaintances within reach, it was natural they should regret the absence of a being, who was not only companionable, but endowed with such rare powers and gifts.

If solitude did not produce the effect desired by our heroine, the middle of June brought with it a change of scene likely to be more efficacious. Lord Stanford wrote and asked his niece to come to Town; Lady Stanford had been ill ever since they arrived in Grosvenor Square; he was sure Diana's presence would do her good; and he proceeded

to enter on the arrangements he had made for her travelling up to London.

Mrs. Gresham was a little vexed to think that Diana would lose the best part of the summer in London; but she raised no other objection; and the only drawback left for our heroine to take into consideration, was the fear of hurting Miss Courtenay's feelings, whose previous invitation she had refused.

"Your aunt is a woman of great discernment; she will see that going to be with your poor Aunt Alicia, who is ill and suffering, is very different to passing the season gaily in Curzon Street," was Mrs. Gresham's consolatory reply. "And, by-the-way, Di, the first time you see Miss Courtenay, you may tell her from me, that I think she was mistaken."

"Mistaken in what?" asked Di.

"Never mind, my dear; your aunt has acuteness enough to guess. If she has not, it will not signify."

"Mamma, you make me curious."

"No, Di, it is you who puzzle me; I confess I do not understand you."

"I do not understand myself; so that is not very surprising."

And, suppressing a sigh, Diana went on with her drawing.

As Lord Stanford had settled every minutiæ of her journey, our heroine was surprised to catch sight of Magog standing by Miss Courtenay's carriage, evidently on the look out for her, as the train rolled leisurely into the London Bridge Station; still more so to find that lady herself awaiting her in the chariot.

"Well, child, I see by your face you did not expect to find me here," was Miss Courtenay's salutation.

"I thought you did not know of my coming."

"And you fancied I should very likely be angry about it," said Miss Courtenay, who knew herself as well as she did everybody else.

But it was I who advised your uncle to send for you."

Diana looked the surprise she felt.

"I have met Lord Stanford several times lately," proceeded her aunt, in her most significant manner; "and one day he asked me to go and see his wife. Poor thing! she has never left her bed since she came to London. As I came down stairs, I met your uncle, and he said, 'How do you think she is?' I could have told him she was dying of grief, which is an ailment no physician can cure; but I would not add a feather's weight to the burden he has to bear, so I answered, 'It's not merely illness, Lady Stanford wants cheering!' I have often called Lord Stanford a cold man, and a hard man; and I have hated him as much as anybody," said Miss Courtenay, vehemently; "but I begin to think I'm becoming a fool in my old age; for the tears came into my eyes as I saw his countenance fall; and next day,

when he called in Curzon Street, I said, 'Lady Stanford talks of nobody but my niece, why don't you send for Di?' And very wisely he has followed my advice."

The varying emotions produced by this narrative were plainly visible on Diana's face, and, for a moment, she could not answer. Miss Courtenay spared her that trouble.

"Lady Stanford, I believe, is not the only person who will be glad to see you in London," said she.

"You are not sorry, Aunt Diana," retorted her niece, with a smile.

"Two old women! well, you need not blush about them, at any rate," added Miss Courtenay, a little maliciously. "However, here we are in Grosvenor Square. Good-bye, my dear. By the way, if you cannot come to me to-morrow morning, I shall call about three; I want to have a little serious conversation with you."

Some days, however, elapsed, before Miss Courtenay saw her niece alone for more than

five minutes. Lady Stanford, with her usual unselfishness, was determined that Diana should not pass her whole day in her sick room, so she made plans for her amusement, and Lord Stanford carried them out. Many young ladies of twenty-one might not have thought it very pleasant to ride out every morning into the country with an old man; but even Lord Stanford smiled at the eager satisfaction which Diana expressed, both by word and look, when, on the first day, she found "Sybil" awaiting her at the door.

"You did not know so old a friend travelled up by the same train with you yesterday, eh, Di?" said Lord Stanford.

If his niece was delighted with her horse, Lord Stanford had a hobby, which he was quite disposed to ride to death. This was the Great Exhibition of 1851; and, after luncheon, far from being tired of his companion of the morning, he came up to his wife's room to ask what time he should order the carriage, for he

should like just to walk through the Crystal Palace with Diana before he went down to the House at five o'clock. Of course, they could not really examine anything to-day; but he could go with her as often, and for as long as she liked.

Diana thought that having seen the exterior of the building in the morning she could very well wait another day; in fact, she would have preferred passing her afternoon where she was; but a mute sign from Lady Stanford, who read her lord's wishes, prevented her expressing this opinion, and she allowed her kind relations to settle the matter as they chose.

She had been in Town about a week, when Miss Courtenay came one day to insist on her driving with her.

"You might just as well come out with me every afternoon, Di; I don't think it is incumbent on you to take Lord Stanford's carriage

for an airing every day. He can well afford, it seems, to let his horses eat their heads off."

"I did once think of asking you to call for me," said Di, in her gentle, persuasive tones, which always appeased Miss Courtenay; "but then Aunt Alicia proposed I should take Milly for a drive every day."

"Humph! well, perhaps, it is a good thing; at all events, it is better than letting her drive about in Frederick Leslie's brougham with that mad-cap Miss Phyllis; you know, she is always with them."

"Yes, Mr. Leslie took a house early in the spring; and his mother and sisters have been with him ever since. Mrs. Leslie is in bad health, and came to town for advice. They are living quite close to Milly, and are a great resource to her."

Miss Courtenay's shake of the head was expressive of disapprobation; but she only said, mildly—

"Is there any chance of your mother's coming to town?"

"I am afraid not," returned Diana. "Uncle Stanford pressed her to pay them a visit, but she says no; Alice and Fanny are, however, to spend a week in Grosvenor Square before I go home, that they may see the Crystal Palace."

"Why does not Mrs. Gresham ask Milly to Furley while you are away?"

"Mamma has invited her over and over again, but Captain Glenny has always put it off. Now he says he cannot leave Town before the autumn."

"It's no use beating about the bush between relations," resumed Miss Courtenay abruptly; and, after a short pause, "so I may as well tell you fairly, Di, that I am not at all satisfied about Milly."

Diana was startled.

"At one time I was afraid Milly's marriage

would not turn out happily," returned she, "but now she seems in the highest spirits."

"Ah!" replied her aunt, "it is those very spirits I am afraid of."

Diana thought a moment.

"You do not think Milly quite steady enough?"

"My dear," said Miss Courtenay, "being steady in the school-room and in the world, are two very different things, as she has yet to learn. Now, I am bound to say, I do not think a thought of evil has ever entered poor Milly's head. For your father's sake I have taken your sister by the hand a little, though we don't move at all in the same set; but I am sorry to say, whenever I do see her in society, she is with those Leslies. It is vastly convenient for Miss Phyllis, I dare say, to drag Milly about as a chaperon, but in my opinion, a young woman of eighteen wants taking care of herself. What does Milly know of the world?"

"I must think it a pity Captain Glenny never goes out with her," added Diana.

"And a greater pity still that Frederick Leslie is always at her beck and call," superadded Miss Courtenay. "I always said he liked her, and I suspect he knows his own mind now it is too late, and Milly will find out the mistake she made in marrying in such a hurry one of these days."

"Pray do not prophecy that, Aunt Diana," said her niece, imploringly, "for you generally prove right."

Miss Courtenay was pleased.

"I have seen something of the world," said she, with an air of self-gratulation, "and I am in hopes, my dear Di, that your being in Town may wean your sister a little from her friends. That would be everything. I, myself, don't like to see married women dancing, but we can't put old heads on young shoulders, and there are different opinions on the subject, still if you could give Milly a hint that it is not good style to be always the last to leave a ball,

I think it would be advisable. She and Phyllis seem to think it quite a point of duty to dance as long as there is any music to jig to, and a feather in their caps not to be home till five or six o'clock in the morning. I only wonder Captain Glenny does not know better than to allow it."

There was a great deal of truth on Miss Courtenay's side, but her niece could not suppress a smile when her aunt went on to say—

"As for the Crystal Palace, I believe they think it made to live in, for I understand that clique"—so she dubbed Milly and her friends—"are to be seen there from morning till night. I always said that Exhibition would be the ruin of London, and that I would never set foot in it, and I've kept my word. See here! is this civilised London?"

Miss Courtenay's wrath was excited because her coachman could not cross from Constitution Hill into the Park under a quarter of an

hour, and still more to her displeasure, a row of bearded Frenchmen on the roof of an omnibus took advantage of the delay, to stare *La belle Anglaise*, who was leaning back in the corner of the carriage, out of countenance.

"That is right, my dear Di, do lower your parasol; it's all very fine talking of the polish of foreigners, but an Englishman is never so mannerless as a Frenchman becomes directly he leaves his own country."

If Diana had been a little amused, she had been a great deal pained by the tenour of her aunt's disclosures. It quite depressed her to think that the rescuing of Milly was committed to her unskilful hands, but she was determined to do her uttermost, and when at dinner Lord Stanford asked whether she would like to have an opera box on Saturday, and take her sister with her, she gladly acceded to the proposal, as one step towards the desired end.

Thus forewarned, it was in vain when Diana

called in Wilton Street next morning to advise Milly of this plan, for Mrs. St. Clair Glenny to propose that they should take Phyllis Leslie with them; her sister excused herself by saying two ladies quite filled an opera box, nor did she seem to understand Milly's hint about there being more than three tickets.

Having steeled her heart so far, our heroine was quite provoked when she called for her sister in the evening, to find that Frederick Leslie, and not her brother-in-law was to accompany them. Whilst Captain Leslie had his foot on the carriage step, Diana had presence of mind enough to ask—

"Where St. Clair was?"

"Oh! he is going to dine out, and has been tantalising himself with sitting by without eating a mouthful, while we had our dinner."

As she spoke Captain Glenny sauntered out of the house. Diana bent forward to speak to him.

"I am so sorry you cannot accompany us, St. Clair, but do join us after dinner."

Captain Glenny, to use a vulgar expression, was quite "taken aback" by his sister-in-law's cordiality.

"'Pon my honor I'm very sorry, but I'm going to dine at the Rag, and I did not think it necessary to put on a white choker, and one is not admissible at her Majesty's Theatre without."

"But it is not too late to rectify that mistake," urged Diana.

"I shouldn't get away in time; it's past eight now; we shan't even have done dinner by ten o'clock, still less feel inclined to move."

Diana had done her best. She felt almost angry with her sister—she was still more so with Captain Glenny, for choosing to accept another invitation, when they had forewarned him of this engagement. It was quite of a piece with his usual selfishness. Could Miss

Courtenay, or even her uncle, Lord Stanford, see them driving along the most public thoroughfares of the metropolis, in company with, and under the escort of a gay guardsman—for Mr. Leslie had exchanged out of the —th Dragoons into the Life Guards—if by any chance they were to see them, what would they think. Diana blushed at the reflection.

Milly guessed by her sister's stiff and reserved manner, she was not particularly well pleased, but as she felt perfectly at her ease with the gentleman who sat opposite them, she made no scruple in his very hearing of reconciling, or at least endeavouring to reconcile her sister to their position.

"You know we could not well go to the opera without a gentleman, Di, and as I knew my uncle Stanford had taken the box, and it was just time to dress when St. Clair came and cried off, I thought myself most fortunate in securing Fred, to take care of us."

Diana tried to be gracious, but her sense of propriety was outraged by the cool way in which Milly addressed Captain Leslie. It was all very well, as a girl, to have called him "Fred," but it did not sound very well now.

Many and many a time since she came to London, our heroine fancied she had caught sight of Mr. Mohun, but the likeness had proved imaginary, or she had lost sight of him in the crowd before she had identified him, or he had turned the corner of a street ere he came near enough for her really to see him; but, on this occasion, before they had been in the house ten minutes, she surely enough saw Basil walk in and take his seat in one of the stalls. Their box was on the grand tier, and when at the end of the first act, Mr. Mohun stood up and took a survey of the house, she felt quite sure he must see them, even without the help of his opera glasses, and, for once in her life, Diana was overcome with shyness, and

turning her head, began to talk to her companions.

When, after the lapse of a minute, she looked round, Mr. Mohun was gone. He was coming up to their box perhaps. Some one opened the door, and with a "beg pardon," retreated; more people looked through the little lattice at the back of the box, but no Basil made his appearance. The music began again, and then Mr. Mohun returned to his place, but he was so intent upon the opera, that he never once looked round. She knew he was fond of music, and Di began to wish she had a taste for it too, or that, at any rate, she had profited by the instructions of the professors, whom, against the grain, Miss Courtenay had forced upon her.

She was so absorbed that she did not hear what her sister was saying, till Milly exclaimed—

"Oh, Di! I do wish you would ride of an afternoon. I am sure you can see nobody creep-

ing out to Highgate and Willesden, with uncle Stanford, before luncheon."

"If I did, you would not care to drive of a morning," returned her sister. "Besides, uncle Stanford likes to ride early."

"But I am going to ride next week, myself," said Milly, with a little air of importance, "and I could chaperon you."

"You? dear Milly! you, who used to be such a coward," objected Di, who had a feeling as to what was to follow, "why, at home, you never ventured to mount anything but the grey pony, and now I do not believe you would get on Sybil's back for the world."

"I don't know about trusting myself to Sybil's tender mercies, now," said Milly, naïvely, "but Frederick Leslie has bought the sweetest and gentlest white Arab in the world, and I have ridden it often, in the school, when Phyllis was taking lessons, and it never even pricks up its ears. And," added she,

turning to the owner of this favored animal, "you said I should not be frightened."

Captain Leslie was quite ready to re-assure her, and it appeared that Phyllis had been laughing at her fears.

"I thought St. Clair never rode," remarked Di, quietly.

"He don't care about it," returned Milly, "or he might have one of his father's horses whenever he liked. However, he promises that he will come into the park to see my feats of horsemanship."

On hearing this, her sister could say no more, besides, Milly so innocently begged her not to frighten her since her new habit, from Ford's, and given her by old Mr. Glenny, was actually made, that Diana was softened. But in all this, she saw proof of the correctness of Miss Courtenay's judgment, and her aunt had spoken so temperately, and judged so wisely on this subject, that she only hoped she might devise some means of preventing Milly

from receiving all these favors at the hands of a man, who was neither a relation nor a friend of very long standing, without either wounding her sister's delicacy, or hurting her feelings.

CHAPTER IX.

——————— That it were possible
To undo things done; to call back yesterday!
That time would turn up his swift sandy glass,
To untell the days, and to redeem these hours.

ANON.

ALL this time Frank Gresham was, with his regiment, quartered at Windsor. Lord Stanford remarked, to his niece, one day, "that he was glad her brother did not, as many of the officers in his battalion were in the habit of doing, pass all his leisure time in London, he was happy," he said "to see that Frank could live quietly and apply himself to rational pursuits."

Di was pleased at the praise, but not sorry

to see her beloved Frank, who, about this time came up to spend a couple of days in Grosvenor Square.

If our heroine expected to have her brother all to herself, she was disappointed, for next day he was closeted with Lord Stanford, in the library, the live-long morning, and at luncheon time, when she thought they would certainly come into the dining-room, she saw them walk out together, and turn down South Audley Street, Lord Stanford leaning on his nephew's arm. Happily, the natural restlessness of Di's temperament had been conquered long ago, or she had not sat so tranquilly through all the hours of mid-day in Lady Stanford's dressing-room. During the last fortnight, her tranquil cheerfulness, her even spirits, and unobtrusive sympathy had done their work, Lady Stanford had revived under the influence of her daily and almost hourly companionship, for our heroine was one of the few gifted beings, who are blest with the happy faculty of bringing

home with them the cream of all they have seen and heard, to cheer and amuse those who, *in propria personæ* cannot seek for distraction, or enjoy any change.

Lady Stanford had just said—

"My dear Di, you are wasting all this beautiful day in doors, had you not better go for a drive? Do ring and order the carriage," when she heard Frank's cheeerful voice on the stairs, calling her.

She ran down to him.

"Come Di, make haste and put your bonnet on, and we will walk down and call on Milly."

His sister had bidden Lady Stanford goodbye, and was ready before five minutes had elapsed.

"You have not been very long, at any rate," said Frank, as he surveyed his sister with satisfaction. Her white transparent bonnet, and grey silk dress evidently came up to his very lofty ideas of the elegant and be-

coming, and he gave her his arm when they reached the street, with the air of a man, who has something to be proud of.

"I suppose, if Milly is out, which I am afraid will be the case, we should not have time to go to the Royal Academy before it closes," said Di.

"You have not been there yet?" said Frank, curtly.

"No, we have talked of it very often, but uncle Stanford has always put it off, and he is so kind taking me everywhere that I do not like to ask him again."

"Well, I will make time to go with you to-morrow, if I can; meanwhile, you need say nothing about it."

Diana was a little surprised at this prohibition, but Frank's next speech drove it quite out of her mind."

They had walked into the Park, and just as they reached the Stanhope Street gate, her brother said—

"Have you seen Basil Mohun lately? My aunt tells me he is in town."

"I did just see the back of his head at the opera one night, but that was all," replied his sister, in the most natural tone she could assume.

"I suppose he does not like to call in Grosvenor Square. There's a sort of diffidence about the fellow, which I like. 'Talk of the— !'" ejaculated Frank, "why, here he is."

Apparently Mr. Mohun was in a brown study, for he did not raise his head till they were within a few yards of each other, and when it was quite impossible for him to avoid meeting them, yet Diana Gresham's guilty conscience made her sensible that his first impulse was to turn aside. In the broad crescent walk beside the Apsley Gardens, this, however, was not feasible. Basil was obliged just to speak in answer to the guardsman's hearty greeting, but he hurried off as soon as

possible, the only notice he took of Miss Gresham being a distant and very formal raising of his hat.

Frank was evidently quite unprepared for this, and surprise made him silent for about the space of thirty seconds, when a downward glance at his sister's face, which crimsoned under his continued gaze, seemed, all at once, to enlighten him.

"You don't say so, Di!" ejaculated he.

"I did not speak," retorted his sister, rallying her spirits by a great effort, and trying to laugh off this attack.

Her brother shook his head.

"It is no use prevaricating, Di, you may as well own the truth at once."

Di remained silent, though she would have given the world, as the expression is, to have said something.

"I do not wish to annoy you," continued Frank, gravely, "but I must say I am very sorry."

"So am I. I would give anything if this had never happened," was all Diana could find voice to say, and her downcast countenance by no means belied her words.

"I am sorry," persisted her brother, "because I think you have thrown away, without due consideration, a chance of real, sterling happiness."

"It is useless to regret it now," returned Di.

Frank went on without seeming to hear her.

"Besides, all women ought to marry."

"That is quite a new doctrine for you to advocate," interposed his sister, hoping to divert his thoughts towards generalities, instead of personalities; but she remembered who, once before, had used exactly the same words.

"Perhaps it is, but as a fellow grows older he is apt to see things in a different light. I am sure," continued Frank, with a sigh, "if I

had the last few years of my life to live over again, I should act in a totally opposite manner."

Diana did not require to be told that her brother had changed very much during the last few months. His father's sudden death had checked him in the full career of folly, but it remained for the appalling catastrophe, which had erased his cousin's name from the page of the living, completely to sober him. The world present, and the world to come, wore a different aspect, were so differently estimated when he thought of those two graves, where the old and young alike rested from the turmoil of this mortal life.

"However," said Frank, with a sigh, "you have nothing to reproach yourself with, as regards the past."

His sister was about to contradict him, but he would not let her speak.

"And with respect to marriage in general, I

must say this, the longer I live the fewer men I meet whom I could bear to see marry my sister. I do not think many fellows good enough for you, Di."

His sister tried to smile.

"Basil Mohun is one of a thousand; though poor, certainly, and Miss Courtenay might exclaim, at your marrying, a simple country gentleman, but *I* do not know a man so well suited to you in every respect, or indeed so well calculated to make any reasonable woman happy."

"Dear Frank, you should have said all this before, it is too late to repent now," said Di, endeavouring to speak lightly, and to treat that as a joke, which, nevertheless, she felt deeply.

Something in the tone in which this was uttered, induced Frank to direct a searching glance towards his sister's face.

"I don't know that," said he, emphatically;

"to judge from his manner, Basil Mohun takes his disappointment very much to heart. He may try his luck again."

"He has too much self-respect," rejoined Di, quickly, "besides, as you must have perceived, he will hardly even look at me."

Frank fancied he detected a shade of bitterness in this speech.

"One question more," persisted he, "have you seriously made up your mind never to marry? Forgive me, if I pain you," added he, seeing the color first entirely desert, and then return with redoubled force to his sister's cheek.

"I do not know—I cannot say," began Di, falteringly; but she resumed, in a firmer tone; "once I thought it quite impossible; and now, though I admit it is possible, I do not think it very probable."

"And why?"

"Because, as you say, there are not many Mr. Mohuns," answered she, unhesitatingly.

Frank was wise enough to take no notice of this *lapsus linguæ;* he passed it over entirely.

"I am sure my mother espouses Mohun's cause, she thought so highly of him," said he.

It offended Miss Courtenay to hear him give this title to Mrs. Gresham; but Frank had known no other.

"Mamma has never spoken to me on the subject; you are the only person I have told of—of—"

"Told!" repeated Frank, drily. "It strikes me, I wrung an acknowledgment of the fact out of you, it was not a very voluntary confidence."

Diana was but too glad to get quit of the subject to mind a little teasing.

"At all events, you are the only person, who has an idea of what has happened, and you must promise, Frank, not to betray me."

"No one is likely to question me," objected

Frank, who had reasons of his own for wishing to evade this pledge.

"Miss Courtenay is always on the *qui vive*, and I have to dine in Curzon Street to-morrow; it is a large party, and I happen to know that Mr. Mohun is invited. If Aunt Diana had a suspicion of the truth, I could not go; indeed, I could not meet him," urged Di, in a tone of the utmost distress.

"I promise," said Frank, with a smile; "will that satisfy you?"

As her sister had foreseen, Mrs. St. Clair Glenny had just started for a ride.

"Shall we go into the Park, and see how Milly gets on?" enquired Frank.

And they turned back through Belgrave Square.

He walked so slowly, and so meditatively, that Diana would hardly have cared to interrupt him, even had she been in the humour for speaking. At last, he broke the silence, by saying—

"I have something to tell you, Di."

"You are not going to be married, I hope?" exclaimed she, half frightened.

"No," rejoined he, "not just yet. There's no knowing what I may do some day; but, at the present moment, I have something else to think of. Business first, pleasure afterwards."

His sister looked at him anxiously.

"Old Mr. Barnard the member for Dimborough, is dangerously ill," began he.

Diana's face lighted up in an instant.

"And my uncle wishes me to stand in his room."

"Oh, Frank!"

It was all his sister could say. This was the summit of her wishes, as it had been the foundation on which her father had built his hopes of his son's becoming a useful, energetic member of society.

"My uncle pays all my expenses; in a word, he has been most generous and kind," said Frank, hurriedly; "but he says I must fight my own battle, for, except that of his ex-

ample, he will use no influence; he does not think it just or right."

"He would not win an earldom by pandering to a party," said Di, proudly, alluding to a paragragh going the round of the papers, and referring to another noble lord.

"The Dimborough people all knew my father," remarked Frank, in a tone which implied, that must make the matter easy.

"And my aunt?" asked his sister, anxiously.

"She is delighted. In fact, it is Miss Courtenay who has over-ruled all my uncle's objections to my leaving the Guards."

Diana re-echoed his last words.

"Yes," repeated Frank. "I did not like to propose it myself, though I wished to do so; but our shrewd old aunt clenched the matter, by saying, that if I really meant to devote myself to politics, and philanthropy, as she calls it, I had better give up soldiering. It was all very well, she said, to quote the Duke

of Wellington as an example, he was a solitary instance; but she should be content if I took a less exalted model. There is such a thing, as she truly remarks, as trying too much at once, and failing."

"Aunt Diana has been most mysterious of late; but I never suspected that this would be the result of all her confidences with uncle Stanford," said Di, joyfully; "but it evidently is," added she.

"Partly," was Frank's laconic reply.

By this time they had reached the Park; and the necessity of crossing Rotten Row put an end to further conversation.

"I should like to see Milly," repeated Frank, as they walked up under the shade of some not very lofty trees. "We shall have time to take one turn here. Why, there's Glenny leaning over the rails!" exclaimed he. "Is he not with her?"

"No," said Di; "she rides with the Leslies."

"I cannot bear that Miss Leslie," returned he; "however, she cannot do Milly much harm now. I do not particularly admire the brother; but people tell me he is a good-natured fellow enough."

Diana did not like to impart Miss Courtenay's doubts and fears to her brother; it did not seem just to Milly; but she listened attentively to catch up any of Frank's stray remarks.

Just as they crossed the bridge, they came in sight of the party they were looking for. They were riding some half-dozen abreast, and Phyllis was laughing and talking to the gentlemen, who were with them, and making herself very conspicuous. Captain Leslie had his hand on the Arab's bridle rein, and Milly looked not a little anxious. She saw her brother and sister, however, directly, and checked her horse instantly, her pretty face beaming with smiles at the rencontre.

They had just time to say a few words; but Phyllis had ridden on, and the Arab began to paw the ground, impatient to join its companions.

"So ho! gently! I assure you, there is no fear. Quiet, mare, quiet!" said Captain Leslie to the pony, of whom evidently its rider felt no small distrust; but Milly thought they had better follow Phyllis; and Fred, too, looked a little anxiously after his sister.

"I should not like to give up the care of my wife to any man," said Frank, throwing back his head a little. "Those *petit soins*, or whatever you call them, Di, on the part of another man, would drive me distracted."

"Here is Captain Glenny," remarked his sister.

"Have you seen Milly?" said that individual, after an exchange of the common civilities of greeting. "I can't think what induces her to ride," continued he, after re-

ceiving an answer in the affirmative, "for she is in fear of her life the whole time. It's vastly good-natured of Leslie, I must say, to take care of her, it's what I wouldn't do for the world, she would bore me to death with her nervousness."

An interruption left the brother and sister alone.

"Just so, my fine fellow," said Frank, indignantly, and half to himself; "you will find out your mistake some day."

Diana did not think it incumbent on her to answer.

"You see a good deal of Milly, do you not?" resumed Frank, after a pause. "I can't bear the idea of her being left to the tender mercies of that selfish beggar," added he, angrily.

"I do my best, but unless I make a positive appointment," returned his sister, "I never find her at home; and, unfortunately

my time is not quite my own. However, we never go more than a day or two without meeting."

"I would trust Milly anywhere, and with anybody," returned her brother; "but it does not make it the less hard upon her."

And from the bottom of her heart, Diana could echo back this sentiment.

CHAPTER X.

Thou art mated with a clown,

* * * * *

He will hold thee, when his passion shall have spent its novel force,
Something better than his dog—a little dearer than his horse.

LOCKSLEY HALL.

And now we meet as strangers meet,
Even with all the past still unforgot.

ANONYMOUS.

THE first thing next morning, Frank hurried his sister off to the Royal Academy. It struck Diana as rather strange that he did not say to which exhibition of pictures they were going. He rather evaded Lord Stanford's enquiries.

She did not marvel long. The first thing that caught her eye on entering was a full length picture of her poor cousin's wife. It was so like Florence, though much handsomer, every good point in her face and form being rendered prominent, and all that was unpleasing softened down that it was impossible to mistake it, even supposing that the Vicomtesse de Chavigny's name, had been kept out of the catalogue, which was not the case. It was perfect as a painting, for the artist had merged the Frenchified, fashionable lady into a Sybilline beauty, arrayed in starry robes, with dark, piercing eyes and flowing hair, as black as night, while upon the white wrist was perched a small and gaudy coloured paroquet, the only living thing to which Florence had ever shown invariable kindness.

Frank drew his sister on.

"We will not stay in that room," remarked he, half-bitterly, half-despondingly.

"The nine days' wonder is not over yet; everybody who looks at that picture tells the whole story."

It was the first time he had ever spoken to his sister of Florence as anything but perfection. And he went on to tell her it was one of Mrs. Gresham's whims last season to sit to B———, and ended by compassionating his uncle, whom this trivial circumstance had, he said, annoyed beyond measure.

"And it is a cruel thing," continued he, "if one reflects on who she was when it was painted, and who paid for it; and what is more, I believe it was sent here for the express purpose of irritating Lord Stanford at least such is my impression, for B—— himself was surprised when he received an order to that effect, and would willingly have withdrawn it at our request, but it was too late."

Half, and more than half of Frank's re-

morse and contrition arose from the reflection that he had supported and upheld Florence. He could not forgive himself for having been so long and so utterly deceived.

Diana had written the evening before to Milly, to say that she and her brother would come to luncheon with her after their morning's sight-seeing. When they reached Wilton-street, however, it was evident they were not expected, for Mrs. St. Clair Glenny had done luncheon, and both the Leslies were with her in the drawing-room.

Captain Leslie had the good taste to feel they were not wanted, and at the first opening he made a sign to his sister, who, though rather unwilling, was obliged to obey, and take her leave.

There was a large basket of fresh flowers on the table, on whose beauty Frank instantly remarked.

"Poor Glenny!" laughed he, "your trips

to Covent Garden, Milly, must cost him something. I shall take care not to marry a country damsel."

"Frederick Leslie brought them for me; and look at my jardinieres, they are lovely; he always keeps them stocked. Is it not good of him?" said Milly innocently, as she ran out of the room under pretence of ordering luncheon up again speedily.

Frank did not utter a word, but he began to whistle slowly and solemnly, a proceeding which to Diana's accustomed ears was symptomatic of annoyance. All this was nothing new to her, for she was well aware how many costly trifles Captain Leslie lavished on her sister. Milly had no idea of the value of money, or of money's worth, and like the child she really was, longed for everything she saw or admired. It was hardly necessary for her to express a wish, Frederick Leslie anticipated her every desire, and environed her with petty luxuries, which her husband had

neither the will nor the means to command.

Meanwhile, the brother and sister were summoned to luncheon, and in the dining-room they found Milly, who, Diana readily divined, had run down to soothe "dear St. Clair." Captain Glenny was very civil to his brother and sister-in-law, but he took his little wife up pretty sharply more than once; first and foremost for not having got her sister's note, which certainly was not her fault, and lastly, for over-feeding and petting a beautiful Maltese dog, another of Frederick Leslie's gifts. Certainly Milly carried it about and talked to it, and treated it quite like a child, but Diana trembled to hear her tell dear St. Clair he was jealous of it; it was a jest she felt, which he might some day convert into a terrible earnest.

To-day, at any rate, Milly's winning ways could not beguile her husband out of his ill-humour, and Di, who saw how difficult Frank

found it to sit quietly by, was glad when he proposed to go. Directly they left the house he began.

"I do think twenty years and more is too great a difference between a husband and wife; they can have no sympathies in common."

Diana began to suspect Frank devoted a good deal of thought to the subject of matrimony.

"Certainly St. Clair has never considered Milly, still she is very fond of him," said she aloud.

"It is a happy thing she is, I only hope it may last; it is a married woman's best safeguard to love her husband even if he be a tyrant. Poor Milly!" and Frank sighed heavily.

After a time he remarked—

"I do not wonder my father was reluctant to allow her to marry when she did; what is she but a child?"

He did not seem to expect an answer, so his sister attempted none.

"I tell you what Di," said Frank again,

"Milly is walking blindfold in a very dangerous path; there will be a flare up one day, depend upon it; Glenny is a violent, ill-tempered man, without either sense or judgment. He will not understand she is acting in the most perfect innocence."

"Dear Frank can nothing be done?" exclaimed Di in despair.

"It is little use interfering between husband and wife."

"But what will be the end of it?"

"I cannot pretend to say."

"Frank, do you not think mamma could caution Milly. A word or hint would be enough to bring her up to town directly?" said Diana, energetically.

"I think it would only make my mother very unhappy, and do no real good. She would be utterly horrified. It is the sort of thing which has never come within the bounds of her experience."

"And are we to stand calmly by, and not

stretch out a hand to help our own sister?" said Di, sadly.

"I think you can do something, by daily intercourse with her; but if you did speak, a word too much or too little might do irreparable mischief."

His sister sighed.

"I have one hope," said Frank, "and but one."

Diana turned an eager, questioning look towards him.

"That Frederick Leslie's feelings are really engaged."

His sister started in horror.

"If he were one of those men, 'which creep into houses, and lead silly women captive,' I should despair," said Frank gravely, "but from the little I know of Leslie, I do not think this is the case. It is not mere selfish vanity on his part; on the contrary, I am inclined to believe, as Miss Courtenay persisted long ago, that he was as much, or more, attached

to Milly than Glenny ever was, only the other spoke first. At least he is straightforward, gentlemanly, and upright; I wish I could think the same of her husband."

"It is dreadful any way."

"This sort of thing is the crying evil of the present day," returned Frank indignantly. "Not that I would compare poor Milly with the vain flirts and heartless coquettes of our generation, who seem to think that the great end to be attained is to secure the admiration and attention of every man except their husband. But it does not bear talking about."

Diana remembered the apostolic words her brother had unconsciously quoted the moment before, and strange to say, they gave her comfort, for they brought also to her mind the promise made in the same holy volume to the children of the righteous; surely her father's daughter would never wander far out of the way.

"Di, you will not let that disagreeable

Phyllis Leslie separate you from Milly?" subjoined Frank, breaking in upon her meditations.

"Oh! no, no," exclaimed she, earnestly.

"And be seen with them in public, as often as you have the opportunity; it sounds worldly, but, believe me, it is good advice."

* * * * * * * * * *

Before he left town, next day, Frank again advocated Basil Mohun's cause with his sister; a letter, in which Mrs. Gresham spoke of the loss their neighbour was to them, having re-opened the subject. He might have spared himself the trouble, there was that within Diana Greshams's own heart which pleaded that same cause clamourously enough. Till yesterday, hope for the future, and regret for the past, had been pretty evenly balanced; she had seen him again, and, if he had spoken harshly, Frank could hardly have caused Diana half the pain which she endured while hearing him persuasively rehearse and dwell on facts whose truth and power she, in her innermost soul, even while,

in words, she evaded anything like an acknowledgment of their power, felt with a painful acuteness.

Our heroine began to think that Mr. Mohun had most assuredly bewitched all her friends and relations as well as herself, for, on arriving in Curzon-street, to dinner, after Frank's departure, before the other guests, the first thing she saw was her own name written down in company with that of the same gentleman on the list with which Miss Courtenay was in the habit of refreshing her memory on such festive occasions.

"I am old-fashioned enough to take some little pains in sending people down to dinner. *Noblesse oblige*, or *dirige* in some cases, but in others I use my own discretion," remarked her aunt, with a mischievous twinkle of her keen black eyes, and her niece was forced to take refuge in the calm repose of manner, almost amounting to stateliness, which usually served as her shield and buckler against attacks of this kind, and which, in the course of the

evening, was called into play more than once. Mr. Mohun came in with the Edmonstones. She persisted in bowing to him, but he never came near her, though Sir Gilbert bustled up full of Furley, and of his nephew's pleasant neighbours, &c., &c.

It struck Diana that Mr. Mohun looked as if he thought them anything but pleasant.

She exerted herself to talk to her kind old friend and admirer, but she could not help picturing to herself, all the while, the expression Mr. Mohun's face would wear when it fell to his lot to lead her down stairs. He, evidently, had not expected to see her there, at least if she read his manner aright, in which pride and pain were strangely blended. Inexorable destiny was against any such experiment. An honorable Miss did not appear with her parents, and *nolens volens*, Miss Courtenay had to promote her niece in her room, and send Basil down all by himself. There was a chair by MissGresham, but without looking at it, he

went round the table after his cousin Miss Edmonstone, and an epergne intervening, our heroine lost sight of him entirely, nor did she even hear his voice once. If he was silent, so was she.

Upstairs Diana had never found it more tedious. Miss Edmonstone never took her eyes off her, and Lady Emily questioned her, almost impertinently, as to the change in her brother's prospects. Our heroine quietly said she hoped it would not make much difference to Frank for many years to come; and, though disposed to be inquisitive, the shrewd, match-making, old dowager took the hint, for, in point of manner, if not in virtue of her age, the younger lady certainly had the advantage.

Meanwhile, she was at liberty to reflect on Basil's conduct towards herself. She could not understand it. It both pained and puzzled her; for it was painful to think that he should thus purposely avoid her; and, even more puzzling, to understand why he did so, when, as she fancied, they had, at all events, parted on

good terms. She was trying to summon up resolution to speak to him first herself, if opportunity should offer presently, when the gentlemen came up.

No, Mr. Mohun!

There was no doubt or suspense, for Lady Emily asked directly where her nephew was; and it was Sir Gilbert who answered that he had gone away directly the ladies left the dining-room, why or wherefore he could not say.

Diana went back to Grosvenor Square and duly answered all Lady Stanford's questions about her party, but as Harris remarked, "it did not appear as if Miss Gresham had much enjoyed her outing!"

CHAPTER XI.

He stood beside me;
The shadow of his presence made my world
A paradise!

SHELLEY.

'Tis strange how woman loves!
Her heart is framed with such tenacity
Of fond affection hardly traced by man.
The harsh word
And harsher blow from one who should be kind,
All these and more may daily come from him,
Who claims the name of husband. Yet all this
Cannot put out the flame of woman's love.
She still will hide his faults; indignant turn
At word of blame.
She knows, if any, how to shed alone
Her tears of disappointed hopes; and yet
Rather to die than to betray the cause
Of him who scarcely turns his eyes on her.

THE PARISH.

THE more our heroine saw of her sister, the

more impossible she felt it to distrust Milly; who, herself, was so artless and confiding. The whole Leslie family were very good-natured to her, and, evidently, very fond of her, but Diana could not perceive that Milly entertained more than the mere liking which was natural towards one who was so invariably kind to her, as was Frederick Leslie. That he should and did feel more for her, who had such winsome winning ways, was, every time she saw them together, still more apparent now that her eyes were opened. Yet Milly seemed all unconscious, and Diana could not help asking herself whose fault was it that the young wife found all her pleasure and distractions in scenes foreign to her home. Milly was domestic and simple enough in her tastes still, for she enjoyed a quiet hour with her sister; and, toPhyllis' great indignation, often preferred coming to pass her evenings in Grosvenor Square, when, while Lord Stanford sat poring over his book, she could talk at her ease to her good-natured

aunt, to going to the gayest ball or party. She had naturally high and elastic spirits, and when Lady Stanford once remarked "they would be a great blessing to her hereafter," Diana thought they were so already; for it was evident to her that poor Milly had plenty of cares and trials to throw aside and rise above. Captain Glenny had quite ceased to put any restraint upon his ill-humour and irritability, and his sister-in-law was well aware that every time Frederick Leslie saw him, harsh, unkind, or bearish, it not only gave him pain, but drew him more and more towards the little, gentle being, who bore with her husband's humours so patiently and uncomplainingly.

All along it had been very evident that Phyllis made use of Milly; through her influence she at once managed her brother, and followed her own headstrong will, and to own the truth, Mrs. St. Clair Glenny was beginning to find her friend rather too exacting and burdensome, and she never appeared more so than one rainy

afternoon, when she made her unexpected appearance as the sisters were comfortably seated at work in Milly's pretty little drawing-room.

Phyllis, who could never rest, was determined to pass her dull afternoon at the exhibition; though who or what she wanted to go and see no one could guess; and she carried her point without allowing her brother, who was much more considerate of other people's feelings, to interfere.

Once upon a time, our heroine would have gone home, or have made any excuse rather than join in such an expedition; but she remembered Frank's warning, and put up her work with the best grace she could assume.

"Dear Di! it is tiresome, is it not?" whispered Milly.

As Diana had foreseen, Captain Leslie gave his arm to her sister, for if her husband neglected her she was always first with his friend, and Diana and Phyllis followed in their train, as well as the crowd would allow; for it was a

day when the cheap rate of admission had brought together a complete *omnium gatherum.* It was very plain that Phyllis expected to meet some one, for she was never still, but moved here, there, and everywhere in the thickest of the throng.

Captain Leslie had said more than once—

"I am afraid you must find it very disagreeable, Miss Gresham, I only wish you would take my other arm—one gentleman is hardly enough to take care of so many ladies."

But Diana did not like to desert Phyllis; when suddenly a cry arose of "stop thief! stop thief!" and, in the general rush, our heroine found herself swept away from her companions, and hurried along in the very centre of a mob of struggling ruffians.

Diana was no fine lady to be more afraid of common people than of those of her own class, but she really was alarmed now, for the policemen's truncheons were flying about; and, in the confusion and excitement, the pushing and

the fighting, she thought she must be thrown down and trampled under foot. She was growing faint and dizzy with affright, and was almost ready to give herself up for lost, when the throng oscillated beneath some powerful impulse, and the last form Diana hoped or expected to see, stood beside her.

Strong as he was, Basil Mohun, for it was he, had to put every muscle of his strongly-knit frame into action to extricate her unharmed. He shielded her from the contact with these rude men; he warded off the blows which threatened to descend on her; yet he only spoke once, and that was when he transfered the hand she so eagerly stretched towards him for protection, from his right arm to his left, still there was a tenderness in his voice, which convinced Diana, as much as if he had said so, that he still loved her.

They stood apart at last, disentangled from the *melée*, and yet Diana was too much agitated to thank him; but it was not terror only which

stopped her utterance, and suffused those deep, soft eyes. His first words of explanation brought back the glowing color, which had forsaken her cheek.

"I saw you with your party from the gallery some time back, still, I fear, but too many moments elapsed before I reached you."

Diana could smile again now.

"But where is Milly? she will be terribly alarmed."

Mr. Mohun had his senses sufficiently about him to suggest that they had better remain where they were, her friends would surely seek her there. The nave was, comparatively speaking, empty now, and he led her to a vacant seat.

Formerly, Basil would have unhesitatingly placed himself beside her, but now he stood leaning against a pedestal near her, watching her intently. Yet he was not angry; for, though few words passed between them, there was that in his manner, in the half-proud and

yet not all indifferent way in which he lavished on her innumerable little attentions—a manner to be felt rather than to be described—which banished all thought of pain.

It was not long that this tender calm endured; others came to mar its stillness and its joy. Poor Captain Leslie! what would not he have given to have been in her sister's place when Milly flew up to her full of enthusiastic affection and artless delight. It was a very thorny path on which he was treading—bright with blossoms, which only crumbled into dust when he would have plucked them for his own.

Basil rather curiously scanned Mrs. St. Clair Glenny's features; if never seen before, he had heard enough to fancy he knew her well, and yet he was disappointed because he could not trace, in the pretty girlish lineaments, the slightest resemblance to the face which he thought angelic.

All Milly cared for now was to get home;

and, whatever their feelings might be, no one raised a dissenting voice. As they walked towards the door, where they were to find the carriage, Diana longed, yet dared not propitiate her companion; but, while Phyllis was loudly protesting against her sitting bodkin, she found voice to say—

"I shall see you again?" Her words took the form of an enquiry.

"Yes," was the response, so quietly enunciated, that none but her on whom those deep expressive eyes rested, could comprehend the mingled reproach and tenderness that little word conveyed.

Time went by, yet no events marked its course. The gay world without rolled on, little heeding and little heeded by the inmates of the large house, which, standing in its centre, seemed shut out from all exhilarating mirth, or exciting gaiety. Could the passers-by, Asmodeus-like, have looked beneath that frowning roof, they perhaps had marvelled at

the heart thoughts revealed within; with none was life dull, insipid, or intentionless, and for one the dream of existence had at length awakened into palpable life and action.

The small service Basil Mohun had lately rendered to our heroine did not bring about the complete reconciliation she had, for some reasons, so confidently anticipated. Whatever his wishes might be, his chances of meeting with her certainly were few, for Diana Gresham rarely appeared in public, and if she went into the Park once a week, it was as often as could be calculated on. Miss Courtenay's carriage generally drew up for a short quarter of an hour at the end of Rotten Row, or under the trees by the Serpentine, and if he saw it, Basil, who was pressed into the service of his cousins whenever they wanted to ride, always made a point of coming up and speaking. The Miss Edmonstones were disagreeable mannered girls, and Diana always fancied they jested with their cousin on his supposed partiality for her

self. She quite believed it was the last thing he would have spoken of, but this supposition, and a habit Lady Emily had taken of vouchsafing her more than her ordinary meed of civility, annoyed her none the less.

Once again too, when Frank came up to Town for a night, she saw Mr. Mohun at the opera. This time he certainly spent the evening standing at the back of their box, where he could see nothing, and hear but little—no small sacrifice on the part of a *fanatico per la musica*—still, only once between the acts did Captain Glenny vacate the seat behind our heroine's chair, and though then he did have an opportunity of speaking to her, yet Diana was at last made sensible that to be with him and not to feel the friendly familiarity of old times, was anything but enjoyment, the rather a painful pleasure.

Meanwhile, Phyllis had fluttered on into the snare of a so-called brilliant marriage, and she was very little in Wilton Street, an absence which Diana hardly knew whether to rejoice at or

lament over. Milly lost a companion, it is true, but Phyllis's friendship would in no other respect be a loss. At all events, this change by no means affected Captain Leslie; his habit of morning calls and afternoon attendance underwent not the smallest alteration; and our heroine almost began to hope that both Miss Courtenay and Frank had been premature in their judgment. She was romantic and guileless enough to begin to fancy, that if Captain Leslie's attachment were as intense and all-absorbing as they imagined, that he would be capable of devoting his life to the promotion of the happiness and peace of her he loved, and, forgetful of self, would never breathe into the pure ear of the young wife, one sullying thought of love.

She had almost persuaded herself into placing entire faith in this fallacious hope, when one day on going to make her usual call on Milly, she was told Mrs. St. Clair Glenny was "not at home." There had been a great

settling of plans in Grosvenor Square that morning, which she was anxious to communicate to her sister. Captain Glenny had faithfully promised to bring her to Furley the beginning of August, and she hoped they might all move together. She was so anxious to arrange this, that she next inquired for her brother-in-law. He had been gone out an hour or more.

Miss Gresham beckoned the servant down to the carriage, and began to question him as to when he thought his mistress would be in, or whether it was likely she should find her at Mrs. Leslie's.

Smith appeared a little confused, but after some very unsatisfactory answers, he volunteered to call Jane. That damsel brightened up considerably at the bare mention of going into the country.

"I am sure it will do my mistress a power of good," Miss Gresham ;" and, continued she, in a whisper, "if you would just make an excuse to step in-doors, and go up straight to

Mrs. Glenny in her own room, it would be a blessing, I'm sure. She won't let me in."

Diana exclaimed in surprise, on finding Milly was really in the house.

"You see Smith could not go against his orders, Miss," said Jane, apologetically.

Diana was a bad dissembler, so she attempted no excuse for her intrusion, but she was really frightened, when, on entering her sister's room, she found the light excluded, and she lying on the bed.

"Milly, dear, why did you not send for me if you were ill?" exclaimed she.

"I have nothing the matter with me," was the answer given in the most disconsolate tone, and without turning her head.

"Something is amiss," persisted Diana, softly, "for it is not like you Milly to be lying here."

"I don't think I am like what I used to be; I wish I were. Oh! Di, why cannot people be always good and happy?" and so saying Mrs. St.

Clair Glenny raised herself from her recumbent position, and displayed to view eyes still heavy with uncontrolled weeping.

This was a question which the wisest amongst us would find it difficult to answer, and Diana's only response was a caress.

Her sister looked up into her face.

"You would love me whatever happened, Di?"

An unhesitating answer in the affirmative only brought a fresh flood of tears, and after exhausting all commonplace methods of comfort, and never seeming the nearer to the source of all this grief, our heroine ventured to ask—

"Is St. Clair angry with you?"

"Everybody blames St. Clair—everybody talks to me as if he were unkind!" said the young wife, vehemently. "Di, I should have thought *you* would have known how much I love him, that he may say or do anything——."

There was a piteousness in her mingled grief and indignation which went straight to her sister's heart, and she hastened to soothe poor Milly's aggrieved feelings.

"I know you love him with all your heart; but I thought, perhaps——." She checked herself, fearful of saying anything that would give her pain.

"I do love him; but. oh! what shall I do? I ought to tell St. Clair everything; I never have had a secret from him; but if I tell him now, he will be sure to think it all my fault—besides——"

Diana could not find it in her heart to smile at Milly's inconsistencies.

"I am advising blindly," said she, "but you may be sure, that to be open and sincere is the best course, even if it appear at first the most painful."

Milly looked wistfully up into her face.

"I wish I knew what to do," repeated she."

"There is generally a right and a wrong to direct the judgment, in every circumstance of our lives," observed Di.

"And I suppose I have chosen the wrong; but I did not know it," sighed Milly, and there seemed every chance of her relapsing again into a state of abject despair.

"I am sure you did not," returned her sister warmly; "but you puzzle me; sometimes you talk as if the evil were irremediable, and then again as if you were still hesitating. Which is it, Milly?"

Her sister answered this question by another.

"Di," said she plaintively, "if you had seen me acting foolishly, you would have remonstrated, should you not?"

Diana did not know what to say. Her sister read her answer in her face.

"You have thought me in fault then?" said she sadly.

"I never for an instant blamed you," returned Di quickly; "but I have seen that

lately you have been placed in very difficult circumstances; so much so," added she, "that I thought in noticing them I might add to your embarassment."

"Tell me what you think I ought to do now?" repeated Milly.

Diana did not like to press for further confidence, but she was equally afraid of counselling unwisely.

"I came to tell you that Aunt Alicia will be well enough to move to Sutton Priors next week, and, perhaps, if you made an excuse of my going to come to Furley rather earlier——" began she hesitatingly.

"Next week," said Milly despairingly, "that is so far off, and I cannot, indeed I cannot see him again. I said I never would." She almost sobbed.

"He! who?" exclaimed Di.

A few words sufficed to explain the cause of poor Milly's grief—words which dyed her cheek with many a burning blush of shame,

even though hidden on her sister's neck. It was a recital of that which, though dreading, our heroine had never really believed would come to pass. It was well for Milly to exonerate her husband, blame herself, and shudder at the very recollection of all that had passed, but say what she would, there was no doubt Captain Glenny had been greatly in fault, and Frederick Leslie still more so, though after all, he had acted in accordance with the mistaken views of honour entertained by some men.

It appeared that at luncheon that day, even according to his wife's modified version of the affair, that Captain Glenny had given way to an outburst of temper of unusual violence.

"Something," as Milly innocently said, "had annoyed him."

He had kicked the dog across the room, and when, as usual, it had taken refuge in its mistress's lap, he had raised his cane, and the blow intended for Malta had fallen on Milly's arm. It had left a deep, dark wale on the

soft white skin, and when Diana saw it, she did not marvel much that Frederick Leslie's indignation had burst forth; but he had been more than angry, for abandoning his usual caution, he had been led on to express feelings, whose long suppression seemed but to have added to their fire.

To make it worse, Captain Glenny had left the room, and the house without a word of apology to the gentle, unoffending creature, whom in deed, if not in intention, he had so grossly insulted, and that, too, in the presence of another man.

Flushed and quivering with rage, Frederick Leslie sprang to his feet, and clasping her hand with an earnestness which would not brook control, had said she should never again be subjected to such brutal violence. He would fly with her to the utmost corner of the earth, where no breath of reproach or word of blame should reach her—her so pure, so good, and so

forbearing. His love—a love, which had known no pause or change, should uphold and shield her, surely the idolatry of a life-time would indemnify her for the sacrifice he claimed. What were the ties that bound her but reeds severed by the rude hand of him who once had twined them? Had he ever loved her? Could he prize and yet treat her thus? It was impossible; she need not weep, the remembrance of the last few months of her life should soon be cast from her like a troubled dream, and recur no more in the joyful, blissful future they would henceforth share. He would never leave her, they would never part again, his heart should be her home; but when he strove to draw her towards that haven Milly shrank back in horror. In her youth, her innocence, her artless confidence, she had never dreamed of this. Had she comprehended him, she had not even heard thus much; but she had trusted him so implicitly, depended on

him so entirely, and now she shuddered at his touch, as though he had been some noisome reptile.

Frederick Leslie had made a great mistake, a mistake into which men, judging of women by themselves, or from their experience of the lowest and weakest of the sex, are but too prone to fall. The love of the one springs from the heart, that of the other from the senses, and it is not strange that he who is swayed only by passion, should not comprehend the tenacity with which a woman's fond affection clings round the idol she has enshrined within her innermost soul. The vanity of women, it must be confessed, misleads many a man, and makes him think ill of the whole race; for this most feminine weakness bears the appearance, if it has not the strength of a sentiment; but it would be amply chastised could those women who entertain it, for once, and but once, clearly see the way they are regarded by

those, who at one and the same moment, misconstrue and foster it.

Frederick Leslie was better, if not wiser, than the generality of those who have found themselves in a similar predicament. He had not acted designedly, but on the spur of the moment. He had never once looked into his own heart, and asked himself the simple question, "What was to be the end of all this?" He was ashamed and angry with himself, but his esteem was a hundred-fold heightened for the little being, who, with the dignity of a woman and the simplicity of a child, so soon as she could sufficiently command herself to speak, thus addressed him:—

"I am sorry, not only that you should think so meanly of me, but because I thought you were my husband's friend. What will be St. Clair's feelings, if I am thus degraded in my own eyes? I have heard that the world is wicked, but I never could have believed that

you, who have been so different, could so mistake me."

He strove to plead for pardon and oblivion.

"No, I have learnt a lesson I never shall forget. I forgive, because I have been always told that it must be a woman's own fault if any but her husband speak to her of love. If I have misled you, believe me it was unintentionally. Now leave me, it is the only reparation you can make."

Entreaties and professions of repentance were of no avail. If Milly possessed little worldly wisdom, as it is called, she had a strong, unswerving principle of right, whereon to depend.

"No, she could never see him again, never meet him, as she had done."

His old affection, his long tried love, instead of pleading in his favor, only strengthened her resolve. Frederick Leslie obeyed and left her. Indignation had dried the tears, which unkindness had called forth, but they welled forth

again when the moment for action was over.

Poor Milly! the events of that day would rankle in her mind, and leave indelible traces there, long after the mark of that unfortunate blow had worn away.

CHAPTER XII.

No word of his,
However harsh, had dried the fountain up.
In those long hours, he lay like one whom death
Had paralysed, and when he woke he called
On Susan's name; however coldly loved
In hour of strength, yet still it was the name
Mixed up in his rude mind with gentle care.

THE PARISH.

ONCE before, when meditating on life matrimonial, our heroine had asked herself whether there were any such thing in the world as real happiness, and during the course of this long, sad afternoon, she was almost tempted to doubt the existence of such a feeling as real love, at least in the mind masculine.

It has been said that "civilised nations lose

their sublime instincts," and, in truth, in the present day, people are prone to talk of love far more than they ever feel it. These *babillards* are those to whom the highest, holiest instinct of our nature is nothing more than a passion or a pursuit; the pastime which fills up a vacant hour, occupies a vapid mind, and affords food for that craving for excitement which is the mental disease of the nineteenth century. While, on the other hand, love is looked on as a frenzy or a folly by those who would steer clear of the puerilities of the age, and keep themselves "unspotted by the world." Between the weakness of the one class and the hardness of the other, the feeling, which Heaven bestowed, made Eden a paradise, has indeed well nigh ceased to be sublime.

Diana Gresham, with the philosophic mind of twenty one, might well be puzzled in the endeavour to trace out the ramification of a sentiment whose real growth is so deep and so profound. The life of this mystic flower,

sought by all though found, alas! by so few, is, perhaps, one with the life of many a heart, but how rarely do we see it blossom! it hardly blooms more frequently than that fabled aloe, which flowers and dies once only in the course of a century. The counterfeit flourishes indeed for a while, fair and bright in outward seeming, but the first chill wind or biting frost of adversity comes, and where is it?

Our heroine's own early experience had, perhaps, tended to make her distrustful. She knew not of the void, which had, in this world, ever remained unfilled in her dead cousin's life and heart. What fruit had the so-called love, Captain Glenny had entertained for her sister, borne? she questioned with herself, as she looked at poor Milly's heavy eyes and pale cheeks; and as for Frederick Leslie, to call that love, which was based on such a false foundation—built up of self and passion only was a profanation, and a sacrilege, which caused the blood to curdle at her heart, as she

thought of the fate, the undying remorse, the never ending repentance to which he, in a moment of infatuation and madness, would have condemned her innocent sister.

Yet, with all this, there was some feeling hidden down in the depths of her own heart, which rebelled and cried out against this utter want of faith. Something whispered that all that was noble, all that was exalted, all that was pure in sentiment and in principle had not passed from earth; and her cheek glowed, and her eye brightened as the remembrance arose that now, as in the days of chivalry, men were to be found, who could love truly, constantly, and devotedly, men, to whom love was not a thing of time or passion born of earth, here to day and gone to-morrow, but a divine and soul elevating reality, the one solace carried by our first parents out into the world, when they forfeited their first estate, and left all other happiness behind. Love comes to all, in virtue of this inheritance,

nevertheless, all natures have not the strength of mind and stability of purpose, which is requisite not to feel an all absorbing passion, but to retain and ennoble it.

When all was told, not many words passed between the sisters. The silent sympathy, the mute comfort of Diana's presence was enough for Milly, in her present state. It seemed to give her strength, strength sorely needed for the task before her. It was easy to see that, in proportion as her excitement subsided, Milly's dread of seeing her husband increased. In the moment when her harassed spirits required support, shelter, and a firm resting place, she had turned to him as her natural protector; it was the first instinct of her pure guileless heart, but though she said nothing, Diana plainly perceived that now she waited and anticipated his return with doubt and trepidation. If she had not ceased to love she had learned to tremble beneath the anger

of the man, who was, at once, her worshipped idol, and her harsh tyrant.

The afternoon wore away, but Diana could not bear to leave her sister, and she would not have done so when the carriage returned, had not Milly bade her go, saying simply, she had better speak to "dear St. Clair,' directly. One thing was certain, Captain Glenny must, sooner or later be told why Frederick Leslie was banished from his house. Milly could not bear to keep anything from the husband she still loved; but though Di did her best to encourage her, she trembled for the consequences which might ensue from this strict adherence to the law of perfect confidence. Like some one else now "chewing the cud," of very bitter fancies, she admired and respected the little wife more than she had ever done before.

At Hyde Park Corner, the carriage was delayed by an immense crowd, a gentleman, the footman informed her, had fallen down, some

said in a fit, some said knocked down by the pole of an omnibus; they were bringing down a stretcher from the hospital door, and Diana turned away her head lest some dreadful spectacle should meet her eye. She had seen enough of accidents.

She had reached Grosvenor Square, had paused in the drawing-room, to talk with Lady Stanford, and was proceeding up to her own room, when a thundering knock came at the house door, and no sooner was it opened than she heard some one eagerly enquiring for Miss Gresham.

Some prescience of misfortune must have seized Lord Stanford, for he, too, looked out of his dressing-room to ask what was the matter just as Diana, impelled by some sudden impulse, hurried down stairs.

The messenger was only a ragged helper from the stables in Wilton Street. He could not say, as he expressed it—

"Percisly what wor wrong, but it wor a matter of life and death."

Collins extracted from him that he had been sent off by one of Mrs. Glenny's servants, and he repeated—

"Miss Gresham was to come directly."

Di's only thought was that Captain Glenny had returned; most probably he was very angry with Milly, and her well-intentioned confidence had resulted in a scene of unprecedented violence. Intuition had told her long ago, that Smith and Jane espoused their young mistress's cause, and most probably one of them had sent for her.

All this passed through her mind, as she saw Lord Stanford turn and take his hat. He was pale as death, and his voice trembled as he sent such a message up stairs to his wife, as would awaken in her no causeless anxiety, but had he not cause to fear, who, within little more than a year, had been hastily sum-

moned to see his brother expire, and to stand beside the clay-cold form of the son with whom he had parted but two days before, in all the pride of youth and strength.

Old as he was, Lord Stanford was a man full of energy and action, he did not seem to think of waiting to order out the carriage again, but hailing a Hansom, handed his niece in, and took his place beside her. He did not speak, and Diana could not trust her own voice, though anger, more than fear, made her tremble. There was no need of explanation, if as she almost dreaded, St. Clair had again lifted his hand against his poor little wife, the fact would speak for itself. It was time for some one to interfere, and who would do it so well, so tenderly, or with such authority, as the grey-haired relative who sat beside her.

Wen they reached Wilton Street, the house-door stood wide open; a policeman and a few common men were lounging on the steps; but no one noticed their entrance

save Malta, who thrust his black nose through the banisters, and barked sharply at Lord Stanford.

The dining-room and the drawing-room were both tenantless; but as Diana was hastening up higher still, she almost fell over Milly, who was sitting motionless in a dark corner of the stairs. She did not appear surprised to see either her sister or her uncle; she only raised her hand to enforce quiet.

"He did not speak to me—they carried him up-stairs—he could not walk," said she, in a hollow whisper, and with white, trembling lips.

"What!" ejaculated Lord Stanford.

"They will not let me into the room; they only say I shall see him presently," continued she.

"My poor child! what is the matter?" said Lord Stanford, inexpressibly affected.

The door above opened, and Milly slipped

away from the tender grasp which would have detained her; but she signed to Diana to follow.

Poor St. Clair Glenny! it was only necessary to look at the handsome face drawn and distorted to be aware that he was suffering from an attack of paralysis. He was not altogether unconscious, for his wife's approaching step caused him to raise his heavy eyelids, and he tried to address her, but in vain; he had lost the power of articulation.

"He will be able to speak to you to-morrow," said the physician, kindly, and withdrawing into the adjoining room, he proceeded in set terms to pronounce his verdict.

It was well for Milly that the present fully engrossed her mind. It was sad enough for others, whose affection for the sick man himself had but little part in their concern, to hear Captain Glenny condemned to a life of weakness, and of suffering. One side of him was completely paralysed, he would never re-

cover the entire use of his limbs, but in a few days, speech would return, and, after a time, he would be able to leave his bed.

"In fact, like others similiarly affected, he will be capable of enjoying life, and of executing many, or most, of its duties?" said Lord Stanford, enquiringly.

The learned doctor shook his head.

"Worse than that; his patient could never be the strong, hale man his frame demonstrated he must once have been. He certainly might live for years; but his would most probably henceforth be the existence of a complete invalid."

"And his mind?" almost whispered Lord Stanford.

"That, of course, must suffer with the body. Memory, too, would fail. It might not be apparent just at first; but they must remember that much irritability must necessarily attend such severe bodily depression. Mrs. St. Clair Glenny—"

"Is not nineteen," interposed Lord Stanford, with a sigh; "what a life for her!"

"He is fortunate in having such a nurse," was the reply, accompanied with a glance into the adjoining room, where the young wife stood, lavishing cares and affection on one now incapable of any response.

Tears stood in Diana's eyes, as she watched her sister chafe the numb, nerveless right hand. It was powerless to strike now, feelingless, though Milly pressed it again and again to her warm, glowing lips.

Sudden, indeed, had been the change. On the way to that home where his coming had been anticipated with such varying feelings, Captain Glenny had been stricken, not by the hand of man, but by that of God. It was no accident, but a fore-ordained calamity, sent, perhaps, as our heroine sadly thought, to ward off other, and perhaps deeper griefs. His sister-in-law had passed by at the very moment, though she knew it not. She almost excused

even the harsh deed of that day, when the physician added, that "probably Captain Glenny had been suffering, though unconsciously, for many weeks before. Such an attack, though apparently sudden, had in reality many precursors."

Lord Stanford sat down to write to old Mr. Glenny. He, with his wife and daughter, were absent from England, having gone to the German baths in search of the remedies they offer against ills, which ever lurk upon the board of Dives. But he was their only son.

Meanwhile, he sent off an express to summon Mrs. Gresham. She would assist her daughter in affording that attendance, which it was alike her pleasure and her duty to extend towards her suffering husband. She would take care of Milly, who, in the short time he passed beneath her roof, Lord Stanford plainly saw was engrossed but by one thought, actuated by but one motive.

Oh! the mighty power of love, which, in a

true woman's heart, atones for all things, bears all things, and, with undying tenderness, alike in weal and woe, enfolds the one beloved object.

* * * * *

As long as Captain Glenny was in any danger, and for many days his life hung on a thread, none of his wife's family thought of leaving town. It was fortunate for Milly that Lord Stanford staid, for he had authority and weight enough to keep Mrs. Glenny in order, who, with her clamourous grief and officious cares, overwhelmed everbody, including her unfortunate, powerless son. If St. Clair would have allowed it, she would have superseded Milly entirely in her office as nurse, and put her aside as an incapable child; but his restlessness in his wife's absence, and his satisfaction at her return, after ever so short a separation, were too apparent to be misconstrued;

her name, too, was the first that passed his lips, and so soon as he could make himself intelligible, he positively refused to allow any one else to render him the smallest service.

Such as he had been in health, so did Captain Glenny show himself in sickness. He was selfish, and by no means patient, but he was ill and suffering; and that, in his devoted little wife's eyes, was enough, and more than enough, to excuse all his failings—past, present, and future. His exacting love was a recompense and reward which filled Milly's soft heart to overflowing. He was her "own St. Clair!" her "dear St. Clair!" now more entirely than in the anxious days when she had so often vainly longed for the smallest expression of affection.

Directly he could undertake the journey, the invalid was to be removed to Furley; but this could not be accomplished at present. Meanwhile, Lord and Lady Stanford went down to Sutton Priors, taking Alice and Fanny with

them, and Miss Courtenay, who, like a city-bred sparrow, would not have cared if she staid the whole year round in London, was delighted with this excuse for prevailing on her niece to stay with her, even though taxed with little Georgie's presence in addition, for whom there was no room in Wilton-street, but whom Mrs. Gresham did not like entirely to lose sight of.

Our heroine had enough to employ her thoughts, and little time to commune with her secret heart. Events were crowding on, one after another, and not the least important was the Dimborough election, which was to take place the end of August. A fierce contest was anticipated, not for the sake of the place, for Frank Gresham's opponent had never seen the town till the day of his nomination, but for the value of his vote to the party whose stop-gap he had the honour of being. He was rich, too, and wished to be in Parliament, so he threw away money right hand and left; but though almost des-

pairing, the Gresham party still fought manfully, and Frank himself spent his days and almost his nights in canvassing. If personal popularity gained an election, he was the man for the Dimborough people; but the mob do not always carry the day. His sister was, therefore, surprised to receive a letter from him at this critical period, with the Windsor post-mark; still more astonished, when she had possessed herself of the contents. Frank was going to take to himself a wife, and that wife was no less a person than Miss Ethel Bingley, who once and only once before has appeared on the pages of this work.

It was a romantic story enough, as times go, and though he began by saying he could only write three lines, Frank spun out his narrative over three whole sheets.

Miss Bingley, as we have before hinted, was one of a large family, the tenth child of a seventh son. Her father and mother were expiating their poverty and their love on the

sultry plains of India, and when Ethel, whom they had left in England, at the tender age of three, grew up into a pretty, pleasing girl, the Dowager mother of Major Bingley thought it would be as well to speculate on her attractions in England before shipping her off for India. She promised her three years, but her fate was fixed before two had passed. Lady Glantyre thought her dear friend Miss Courtenay's nephew, a very suitable match for her grand-daughter, and Frank had received every encouragement, not only in London, but at Windsor, for Lady Glantyre had a pretty house on Englefield Green, where this year she had passed the summer, and Frank had pleased himself with prosecuting his suit.

Like many another man, Frank Gresham had walked, not fallen into love, and feeling pretty sure of Miss Bingley's regard, he had not hurried himself in declaring his attachment. He never thought that this tardiness could cost her anything.

If Ethel was patient, Lady Glantyre was not. She had a great idea that Mr. Gresham was only a dangler, and she repeatedly told poor Ethel that if ever he meant to propose he had enjoyed opportunities enough, and to spare. Moreover, other people shared Frank's admiration, and a downright *bona fide* offer from a man of twenty thousand a year was not to be despised. It did not matter, in her opinion, that Sir John Burrell was middle aged, ugly, and *a roué*. Ethel was to accept him, and failing in this point of duty had her choice of being sent out to India *instanter*.

Lady Glantyre had said it, but she never expected to be driven to fulfil her threat. It was a choice of evils certainly, but to leave all she knew and loved, and encounter parents, who were perfect strangers to her, was not so utterly repugnant to the girl's feelings, as it was to marry one man and still love another.

Frank put off explaining through whose

intervention he heard of this arrangement before it was carried into effect, but he informed his sister, that if Ethel had started by one mail, he should have gone to India after her by the next. Perhaps Lady Glantyre had calculated upon this; there is no knowing to what lengths a thorough paced Dowager may not push her scheming.

Another of the family fallen a prey to love; Frank going to be married, and yet our heroine felt no fears for the happiness which would result from this union.

CHAPTER XIII.

He knew
A childish fancy had forestalled my heart,
And well can I divine the bitter pangs
This knowledge must have caused him. But at first
He was so tender, so forbearing, kind,
That day by day he grew into my heart.
Displacing thence my early girlish dream.
One day you'll learn this sweet and serious care,
This grave imperious charm, this holy bond,
Where love is mingled with respect and awe.

MADONNA PIA—a Tragedy.

THIS step on Frank's part gave infinite satisfaction to his family. Miss Courtenay liked the connection; Lord Stanford plainly said that marriage was the only thing which really steadied a young man of his nephew's age,

and Diana was satisfied because she had divined long ago that Ethel loved her brother with an entire devotion, which few would have anticipated from a girl who had been brought up on the principle that to marry and to make the best match she can is the great aim and object of a woman's life.

Frederick Leslie and his attachment to Milly was apparently quite forgotten in the universal family excitement occasioned by the two very opposite events of Captain Glenny's illness and Frank's marriage, and Diana rejoiced that nobody renewed the subject with her, for she was too much in Milly's confidence to be able to say all she thought.

Miss Courtenay, however, forgot nothing; she had a capacious mind, and one day when Diana returned from visiting her sister, she thus addressed her—

"My dear, have you heard or seen anything of Frederick Leslie in Wilton-street, lately?"

Diana could with truth reply in the negative, and she furthermore added that Milly saw no visitors whatever.

"You know she never leaves St. Clair for more than five minutes together."

"Humph!" said her aunt; "There's no accounting for men."

Her niece was too well accustomed to these sentiments to give much heed to them.

"Frederick Leslie leaves England to-morrow," proceeded Miss Courtenay abruptly, as though she were determined to make a sensation.

"Before his sister's marriage takes place?" said Diana, who was at last surprised.

"Yes, Mrs. Leslie is dreadfully vexed about it; she thinks it is a slight upon her rich son-in-law. But Mr. Fred does not care. After all the interest his mother exerted to get his exchange into the Guards, he has sold out, and the first she heard of it was not from himself, but by seeing it in the Gazette. And

he is going off to Australia, and half round the world besides in a miserable little yacht all by himself. That comes of young men being independent. He is rich and he is fanciful; he has no one to controul him, and his present passion is solitude."

Diana Gresham looked grave.

"Perhaps it will be better for Mr. Leslie in the end to go abroad, see the world, and enlarge his mind, than to stay here ever moving on in the same small circle of conventionality and pleasure." said she at length.

Miss Courtenay looked searchingly over her spectacles at her niece.

"You reason like a philosopher, Di," remarked she, drily, "but Mrs. Leslie feels like a mother."

"Any hardships, or any amount of 'roughing it' to use Frank's favourite expression," remarked her niece "is better for a man's character than an objectless life of careless ease."

"In fact," said Miss Courtenay, "you rather rejoice over Frederick Leslie's self-banishment."

"I think it a good thing, as far as he himself is concerned."

"And for other people too, perhaps," retorted her aunt, "but considering all things, I rather wonder at his taking himself off, just at the very time when there is a chance of Mildred's being free to make a second choice."

Diana looked shocked.

"I have no fears for Milly; her conduct speaks for itself," said she a little proudly.

"And you think me very worldly, I dare say," continued her aunt, "I do not judge of the world as it ought to be, but as it is."

"I had rather not think so badly of mankind in general, still less of one, who, whatever may have been his motives, has certainly shown no small kindness to Milly."

"My dear, you have a way of speaking just

like your poor father," remarked Miss Courtenay. "The Dean never said an ill word of anybody."

The end of August was hot, sultry, and oppressive, and the thunder storms, which followed each other in succession, added weight to the atmosphere of London instead of clearing the air. Miss Courtenay thought the roses on her niece's cheeks were losing their freshness, and announced that she should soon carry her off to Hampton Court; but this was only a well intentioned threat, for she was kind enough to do everything in her power to facilitate Captain Glenny's removal to Furley. And if it was a little against the grain, she carried her good-nature far enough to insist on taking him out in her carriage daily, by way of preparation for the journey.

The first time she put this well-devised project into execution, she came home quite grave and thoughtful.

"I should not have known your brother-in

law again, Di. Indeed I should not; he is so painfully altered."

"I do not perceive the change to be so great from seeing him every day," rejoined Di; "but Frank was dreadfully shocked the first time he saw him."

"Poor Milly!" said Miss Courtenay. "I felt for her when his man actually lifted him into the carriage like a child; she seemed so anxious, and he has no power to help himself, except with one arm, I perceive."

"Milly is quite wrapped up in him," returned Diana, with half a sigh. "In her eyes of affection, he is even dearer than he was as the Apollo she used to consider him; and, prejudice apart, he was a very handsome, solder-liike looking man."

Miss Courtenay was silent awhile, then she said gravely—

"Di, I am afraid you will find your home very different from what it has been, when always shared by a complaining, querulous

invalid, and I warn you, that you, or rather your mother, is saddled with Captain Glenny as long as he lives, poor man! Mildred must always be with you, or you must always be with Mildred; every one is of opinion that she ought not to be left to bear such a burden alone. Even the Glennys see it in this light, they are old people themselves, and want all their daughter's attention, so it ends in St. Clair being thrown entirely on his wife's family."

Diana was about to speak, but Miss Courtenay, by a sign, bespoke her further attention.

"I know you are going to say that Mr. Glenny has behaved with great consideration; so he has, but I don't think it's more than he ought to do for his own son, when he says, 'Don't let money be a consideration, take what he has, and if that is not enough, I will advance more, I have enough and to spare.' He knows Milly's value, and he ought to keep a house over her head, and though it seems extravagant not

to let No. —, Wilton Street, I don't imagine that with Mrs. Gresham to manage for her daughter most part of the year, they will come upon him for much."

Miss Courtenay was so great when it came to anything like accounts or arrangements that Diana now settled herself to listen.

"But to you, Di, I wish to speak seriously, and I say consider well, before you refuse a home of your own. I am an old maid, and a contented one," proceeded Miss Courtenay quietly, "but if I have few cares, remember I have not many joys," and she was gone before Di had recovered from her astonishment, and though when they met again, no more was said on the subject, Diana could not forget those few emphatic words.

Next day, when left to herself in the afternoon, she took up the same book which she had been holding in her hand, while her aunt was speaking, this strange advice recurred to her again; others might coldly reason, it remained for her to feel and to regret; and Diana Gresham

sighed more than once, as she sat meditatively gazing on the frontispiece of the work; but though the contents had great interest for her, she did not read a line.

A thundering knock at the house-door broke in upon her reverie; no one would ask for her, so it only had the effect of causing her to commence her studies.

It was a visitor, however, for the door opened, and Mr. Mohun was announced. He seemed rather confused at finding her alone, asked after Mrs Gresham, and said he fancied she had been in Curzon Street.

"No, she is still staying with my sister."

He made no answer, and some guilty feeling made Diana slip the volume she still held in her hand beneath the shelter of a friendly newspaper.

His quick eye saw the movement.

"Have you read that book?" said he, eagerly, and a flush rose to his face.

"Yes," began she, formally; and then, angry with herself for not preserving the easy

manner she had originally maintained towards him, she added—"And I can guess who wrote it, moreover."

"There is no name on the title-page," rejoined he, suppressing a smile, and trying to speak gravely, but with an expression of pleasure dancing in his eyes.

"That sketch of an encampment, which forms the frontispiece, betrayed the secret to me—if it is a secret," persisted she, with a smile; "and when I brought home the book and read it, I detected your thoughts, and modes of expression, in every succeeding page."

It was very tender flattery, if what was the literal truth can be called by so repellant a name. She only spoke on the impulse of the moment, but her words made Basil's heart beat rapturously.

He had no opportunity for replying, for a little voice was heard calling "Di, Di," and inappropriately enough Miss Georgie marched

into the room. In her delight at seeing her friend she forgot her petition, and not until Nurse came in to look for her, did she remember her preconceived desire to lead Rough, an unwilling captive, into the park. She carried her point however, went through, as children always will, a very ceremonious and affectionate form of adieu with both parties, and, somehow or other, managed to call up a blush into her more staid sister's cheek.

"You will be going back to Furley soon?" said Miss Gresham, as the little girl left the room.

"No, I return to the East almost immediately. In truth, I called to-day to thank Mrs. Gresham for all her kindness, and to take my leave," was the grave, quiet answer.

At these words every shade of colour vanished from Diana Gresham's face. Whatever her inward emotions might be, it was evident she was determined to struggle with them, and unconscious of any outward demonstration of pain, she tried to speak calmly.

"I thought you had six months' leav, when your business was concluded. I fancied you intended to spend them at Furley," began she. She had wished to say more, but her voice failed her, and she paused.

There is something contagious in emotion, and for one instant Basil was as pale, and quite as agitated as herself. For a minute he stood irresolute, then he came towards the sofa on which she sat, and still erect and proudly spoke.

"I had other hopes then. Now I tell you fairly, I have not sufficient moral courage to go back to Furley."

She did not speak—she did not move—she could not even look towards him.

"You may despise me—I almost despise myself for this weakness—but it is not the less felt by me. Time has not changed my feelings—has in no degree lessened the pain caused by your rejection of my too presumptuous suit. I have tried avoiding you; for

many and many a time when you knew not I was near, I was made sensible of your presence by a thrill of pain. I came back to you again, drawn by an irresistible fascination, and because —is it saying too much?—I saw, that though for one moment I fancied the reverse, you still desired we should be friends. I have proved it, and find, as I believed, that friendship was at once too much, and all too little. To go to Furley would only be to prolong this pain, to live through months of fever and of torment, of repressed emotions and restrained words—and to what purpose?"

Diana's face was hidden in her hands, and a gasp, almost amounting to a sob, was the only response.

"I pain you," said he, in a voice of irresistible pathos and affection; "your gentle heart is touched by the expression of my grief. But what am I to do? Even you yourself could hardly bid me stay."

At this appeal, Diana's extreme agitation,

which had long been too great for speech, betrayed itself by an involuntary and almost imperceptible movement of her hand, and the sight of two bright, glistening tears, which slowly came trickling through her fingers, had power at once to change the whole current of Basil Mohun's ideas. He bent over her eagerly; he spoke in a still lower, still more fervent tone.

"One word, and I will remain—I will be patient—I will endure. I shall be more than satisfied if you will accord me but one ray of hope," pleaded he.

Diana Gresham was truthful where another woman would have been only coquetish, and the doom, for which he listened so intently, came at last.

"You will stay."

No ear but that of love could have caught that imploring, beseeching whisper. How his soul had thirsted to hear those three short words, and now that they were uttered, Basil

felt giddy, as though not less overpowered by surprise than by joy. He drew a long sigh of intense relief, and his face glowed with mingled emotions of hope and love.

With gentle violence he removed the hands which still concealed Diana Gresham's expressive countenance. Apparently he was quite satisfied with what he there read.

"And six month's hence, when I *must* leave England—am I to go alone?"

He had forgotten the patience he had professed, and perhaps, if she remembered it, Diana did not care to remind him of it.

"That entirely depends on your own wishes," rejoined she, with a smile, which came struggling through the few tears which yet remained.

His thanks were as voiceless as had been her confession, but she felt, if he did not in words express it, what rapture and delight this tardy knowledge kindled in his bosom.

Life is an eternal progression, and though

our heroine never thought of comparing her first ideal dream, with this waking reality, yet it saddened her to remember what once had been. How far back that time seemed. She knew not that young romantic love must change its form if not its essence.

Basil read her feelings in the averted eyes that would not meet his own, and divining the wound brought the balm.

"I am more than content," whispered he, fondly, "believe me, there are no jealousies in the grave."

He did not doubt his own happiness, but he would reassure her, and besides, he shared the feelings common to all humanity, of never tiring when hearing that, which though repeated over and over again, seems always new.

"Yet, I feel what you do not, the extent of the sacrifice I claim at your hands," persisted he. "You leave friends, home and country, all you prize, for years of residence in a land,

which has but few attractions and many hardships. You give up all—"

"And I have—you—" was her low-voiced interruption to this address.

If Basil had suffered, that atoned for all.

"When Miss Courtenay returned, Basil went up to her and frankly told her what had happened.

"It is as much as I can expect, if you are not very angry," said he.

There is an old saying about, "taking the bull by the horns." Miss Courtenay did not answer immediately. She went straight on to where Diana sat, and laying her hand under her chin, looked searchingly into her face.

"You are a lucky man, Mr. Mohun, though perhaps you think I only say so because she is my niece," said she, at length.

In fact Miss Courtenay did not testify the indignation, which her niece half anticipated. That lady was worldly more by habit than on

principle, and her very shrewdness led her to perceive how hopeless was the attempt to influence, on such a point, a girl of Diana's sterling character. Early affliction and sharp mental discipline had matured that character, and long ago, Miss Courtenay had been made aware how futile was the hope that Diana would ever see the world through the medium of her spectacles. She had been the first person to discover that Mr. Mohun appreciated her niece, she soon saw he was very much in earnest, and she liked him none the worse for that. Furley Grange was a grand old place, and all Mr. Mohun lacked was money. Miss Courtenay had been poor herself, therefore she did not despise poverty. She certainly said "humph" pretty often, when in the course of the evening, Basil talked of the years that must elapse before they could hope to return and live at the Grange.

"I suppose Di knows what she is about,"

remarked the old lady, drily. "I have seen a work on Persia pretty often in her hands lately."

It was Diana's turn to blush, and it did not mend the matter when her aunt asked, mockingly—

"Whether they had taken places by the next Oriental Steamer?" and advised them to lose no time about it.

It was a great relief, however, to find that her aunt took the prospect of her marriage in good part; but Mrs. Gresham's tearful congratulations, and Milly's half melancholy rejoicings next morning, harmonised better with our heroine's quiet, serious joy.

She knew what Frank would say, but two days of suspense and anxiety—which even Basil was powerless altogether to charm away, and which was doubly felt when he was absent from her side—ensued after Diana had written to Lady Stanford. She need not have feared, her aunt's youth was not so very far back;

and more, Lady Stanford, even in her uttermost grief, had never been selfish.

Her answer chased away the last, lingering cloud of fear and doubt, which hung on the horizon of our heroine's future. There was nothing forced in these kind congratulations. Lady Stanford did not express the least surprise; on the contrary, she confessed that she had heard enough of Mr. Mohun—though not from Diana—that passage was underlined, to be quite sufficiently prepared. Her niece had done the very wisest thing for her own happiness, and had removed the only objection she ever saw to Frank's marriage. She had feared Diana would miss her brother, now she had amply filled Frank's place.

Lady Stanford opened her letter again to tell Diana in the P.S. that Alice was just what she had been at her age; "and, my dear Di," said she, in conclusion, "I hope I may, like her little namesake, who, at first sight, always mistakes her for you, find in your sister a

substitute for my long, and still best loved niece."

Lord Stanford was not content to express his concurrence through the medium of his wife's letter, he came up to town to see Diana, and to enter upon that weighty matter—the settlements. Frank, too, arrived for the same purpose; and his sister ventured to tell him that she thought it an unnecessary trouble and expense, for that she had no fear of Basil's either squandering her minimum of a fortune, or of his leaving her to starve, if it was her misfortune to outlive him.

Frank laughed, and rather to Diana's horror repeated this heretical remark to Miss Courtenay.

"Humph! we shall see," was that lady's comment. "Come, my dear Di, and hear what the lawyers have to say about it."

The "herewiths" and "hereofs" and "hereins" of the draft of this document, completely

puzzled our heroine; and it was not till Miss Courtenay had severely reprimanded her, and finally embraced her, that she comprehended she was an heiress.

Twelve thousand pounds, the amount of that lady's savings for her niece, went to pay off some of the heaviest mortgages on the Furley Grange property; and Diana and Frank were henceforth to divide the five hundred a year her brother had once enjoyed.

"He has a thousand a year from Lord Stanford, so you need not think you are robbing him; your uncle took him away from me six months ago, and all I have will be yours when I leave this world. There, that will do, you rumple my collar, child, and Basil has hurt my hand too. Why, I thought you did not care for money—quite disappointed at not going to Persia after all? I thought as much. Well, it is a pity, I did not give out my intentions, and then you might have had a

herd of penniless lords and idle younger sons to pick and choose from. Oh! you are satisfied with your choice? that is fortunate, for so am I."

When, to his no small pleasure and surprise, he was duly returned as member for Dimborough, Frank set about the preparations for his marriage in right earnest. His sister talked of waiting till the spring; but it had been from the first agreed they should be married on the same day, and her brother argued, her lover persuaded, and Diana, as usual, yielded.

Miss Courtenay insisted that the weddings should take place in London, and the breakfast be given at her house, to which last arrangement, Lady Glantyre, being of a prudent turn, by no means objected.

"You see," said the spinster lady to Mrs. Gresham, for Miss Courtenay was with them at the cottage, "I generally prove to be right, when I have made up my mind. I know

Sutton Priors is the most natural place, and it was kind of Lord Stanford to mention it; but that is not a house for rejoicing; and if Lady Stanford lays aside her mourning for the day, and comes to St. George's, as she promises, I know it will only be for Diana's sake. Besides, don't you see? at Sutton, Di would be crying all through the ceremony, and others might think it was for her cousin, though I should know it was for her father. Believe me, London is best, where there is no room for associations of any kind."

Mrs. Gresham shed a few quiet tears, which Miss Courtenay did not choose to notice.

"And what is more, you and the Glennys can come to Town for the week on your way to Malvern—not that the water cure will do that poor creature any good—more likely to kill him by far—and then Basil and Diana can spend their honeymoon at the Grange—I fancy that is their truly sentimental purpose."

"It is very natural they should wish their happiest recollections to cluster round their home."

"Yes," returned the maiden lady; "and, depend upon it, *that* marriage will turn out well. It always does when the love is principally on the man's side. When I was a girl, I remember reading in some French book, that it is the part of one to love, of the other *de se laisser aimer*. Di has taken the best *rôle*."

"Yes, but I must think she really is in love," said Mrs. Gresham, stoutly; "she does not make her feelings quite so apparent as Ethel; but I think her attachment is to the full as deep and sincere."

"That may be; but Basil, twenty years hence, will not lord it over his wife, as Frank already does over his *fiancée*. Not that I have a word to say against Ethel; she is just the wife for him—she will give way to him, and think all he does perfection. We all know Mr. Frank is not very fond of being contra-